

Official Report of the
One Hundred Fifty-seventh
Semiannual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah

October 3 and 4, 1987

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THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-SEVENTH SEMIANNUAL GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

The 157th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 3, 1987, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, October 3 and 4, 1987. The general priesthood session was held in the Tabernacle on Saturday, October 3, 1987, at 6:00 P.M.

President Ezra Taft Benson presided at all sessions of the conference. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday afternoon sessions. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning sessions.

Television and radio stations carried portions or all of some of the conference sessions to large audiences throughout the world. In addition, the general sessions and priesthood session were carried via satellite transmission to more than one thousand stake centers. The general priesthood session was also carried by closed-circuit transmission to approximately nine hundred locations in many countries.

General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the general sessions:

The First Presidency: Ezra Taft Benson, Gordon B. Hinckley, and Thomas S. Monson.

*The Council of the Twelve:*¹ Howard W. Hunter, Boyd K. Packer, Marvin J. Ashton, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, and Joseph B. Wirthlin.

The Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy: Dean L. Larsen,

Richard G. Scott, Marion D. Hanks, Wm. Grant Bangerter, Robert L. Backman, Hugh W. Pinnock, and James M. Paramore.

Additional Members of the First Quorum of the Seventy: Franklin D. Richards, Theodore M. Burton, Paul H. Dunn, Hartman Rector, Jr., Loren C. Dunn, Robert L. Simpson, Rex D. Pinegar, J. Thomas Fyans, Adney Y. Komatsu, Gene R. Cook, Charles Didier, William R. Bradford, George P. Lee, Carlos E. Asay, John H. Groberg, Jacob de Jager, Vaughn J. Featherstone, Royden G. Derrick, Robert E. Wells, F. Enzo Busche,² Ronald E. Poelman, Derek A. Cuthbert, Rex C. Reeve, Sr., F. Burton Howard, Ted E. Brewerton, Jack H. Goaslind, Angel Abrea, John K. Carmack, Russell C. Taylor, Robert B. Harbertson, Devere Harris, Spencer H. Osborn, Philip T. Sonntag, John Sonnenberg, F. Arthur Kay, Keith W. Wilcox, Victor L. Brown, H. Burke Peterson, J. Richard Clarke, Hans B. Ringger, Waldo P. Call, Helio da Rocha Camargo, H. Verlan Andersen, George I. Cannon, Francis M. Gibbons, Gardner H. Russell, George R. Hill III, John R. Lasater, Douglas J. Martin, Alexander B. Morrison, L. Aldin Porter, Glen L. Rudd, Douglas H. Smith, and Lynn A. Sorensen.

The Presiding Bishopric: Robert D. Hales, Henry B. Eyring, and Glenn L. Pace.

General Authorities Emeritus: Eldred G. Smith, Sterling W. Sill, Bernard P. Brockbank, and Joseph Anderson.¹

¹President Marion G. Romney and Elder John H. Vandenberg were excused due to ill health.

²Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi was away presiding over the Hawaii Honolulu Mission.

Other authorities present:

Other Church authorities in attendance included Regional Representatives, presidents of stakes and their counselors, presidents of temples,

bishops of wards, and presidencies and members of the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthood quorums.

Many general, stake, and ward auxiliary officers also attended.

FIRST DAY MORNING SESSION

The first general session of the 157th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 3, 1987, at 10:00 A.M. President Ezra Taft Benson presided, and President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The music for the opening session was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

Before the meeting, the Mormon Youth Chorus sang "More Holiness Give Me" without announcement.

President Hinckley made the following remarks:

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this morning from the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City in this, the first general session of the 156th semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Our beloved prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson, who presides at this conference, has asked me to conduct this session.

We welcome all who are participating in the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle and the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Marion D. Hanks and Waldo P. Call are seated on the stand. We welcome also the many others who

are receiving these conference proceedings by satellite transmission, radio, cable, and television.

We acknowledge the General Authorities of the Church, all of whom are in attendance except President Marion G. Romney, Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi (who is presiding over the Hawaii Honolulu Mission), and Elder John H. Vandenberg. We also acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary general presidencies, who are seated on the stand. We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

The Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brother Robert C. Bowden, with Brother Clay Christiansen at the organ, opened this session by singing "More Holiness Give Me." They will now sing "The Lord Is My Shepherd." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder F. Enzo Busche, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

The chorus sang "The Lord Is My Shepherd."

Elder F. Enzo Busche offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

We will now be privileged to listen to President Ezra Taft Benson, President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

President Ezra Taft Benson

My beloved brethren and sisters, what a glorious blessing to be assembled in another great general conference of the Church. I ask for an interest in your faith and prayers as I speak to you about a subject that is very close to my heart and that affects the worldwide Church.

Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution

We have recently celebrated the bicentennial of the signing of the United States Constitution. That commemoration marked the beginning of a series of bicentennial anniversaries of events leading up to the ratification of the Constitution, implementation of the government it created, and the writing and ratification of the Bill of Rights. We look forward to the future commemoration of each of these important events during the next four years. It is as a result of these events that we are able to meet today in peace as members of the restored Church of Jesus Christ. For this we should *all* be eternally grateful.

A divine document

I desire, therefore, to speak to you about our divine Constitution, which the Lord said “belongs to *all* mankind” (D&C 98:5) “and should be maintained for the rights and protection of *all* flesh, according to just and holy principles” (D&C 101:77; italics added).

The Constitution of the United States has served as a model for many nations and is the oldest constitution in use today.

“I established the Constitution of this land,” said the Lord, “by the hands of wise men whom I raised up unto this very purpose” (D&C 101:80).

The great prologue

For centuries the Lord kept America hidden in the hollow of His hand

until the time was right to unveil her for her destiny in the last days. “It is wisdom that this land should be kept as yet from the knowledge of other nations,” said Lehi, “for behold, many nations would overrun the land, that there would be no place for an inheritance” (2 Nephi 1:8).

In the Lord’s due time His Spirit “wrought upon” Columbus, the pilgrims, the Puritans, and others to come to America (see 1 Nephi 13:12–13). They testified of God’s intervention in their behalf. The Book of Mormon records that they humbled “themselves before the Lord; and the power of the Lord was with them” (1 Nephi 13:16).

Our Father in Heaven planned the coming forth of the Founding Fathers and their form of government as the necessary great prologue leading to the restoration of the gospel. Recall what our Savior Jesus Christ said nearly two thousand years ago when He visited this promised land: “For it is wisdom in the Father that they should be established in this land, and be set up as a free people by the power of the Father, that these things might come forth” (3 Nephi 21:4). America, the land of liberty, was to be the Lord’s latter-day base of operations for His restored church.

Declaration of Independence

The Declaration of Independence affirmed the Founding Fathers’ belief and trust in God in these words: “We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.”

The Doctrine and Covenants states, “We believe that no government can exist in peace, except such laws are framed and held inviolate as will secure to each individual the free exercise of conscience, the right and control of

property, and the protection of life" (D&C 134:2). Life, liberty, property—mankind's three great rights.

At the conclusion of the Declaration of Independence, they wrote, "And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm Reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor." This Declaration was a promise that would demand terrible sacrifice on the part of its signers. Five of the signers were captured as traitors and tortured before they died. Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned. Two lost their sons in the Revolutionary War; another had two sons captured. Nine died from wounds or from the hardships of the war. The Lord said He "redeemed the land by the shedding of blood" (D&C 101:80). Nephi recorded that the Founders "were delivered by the power of God out of the hands of all other nations" (1 Nephi 13:19).

Constitutional Convention

The years immediately preceding the Constitutional Convention were filled with disappointments and threats to the newly won peace. Washington was offered a kingship, which he adamantly refused. Nephi had prophesied hundreds of years before that "this land shall be a land of liberty unto the Gentiles, and there shall be *no kings upon the land*" (2 Nephi 10:11; italics added).

Between the critical years of 1783 and 1787, an outsider viewing the affairs of the United States would have thought that the thirteen states, different in so many ways, could never effectively unite. The world powers were confident that this nation would not last.

Eventually, twelve of the states met in Philadelphia to address the problem. Madison said at the beginning of the Convention that the delegates "were now digesting a plan which in its operation would decide forever the fate of Republican Government" (in *Records of the Federal Convention of 1787*,

ed. Max Farrand, [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1911], 1:423).

"The Lord knoweth all things from the beginning," said Nephi; "wherefore, he prepareth a way to accomplish all his works among the children of men" (1 Nephi 9:6).

Four months later, the convention delegates had completed their work. As Gladstone said, it was "the most wonderful work ever struck off at a given time by the brain and purpose of man" (William Gladstone, "Kin beyond Sea," *North American Review*, Sept.–Oct. 1878, p. 185), and the Prophet Joseph Smith called it "a glorious standard, . . . a heavenly banner" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 147).

God inspired the delegates

The delegates were the recipients of heavenly inspiration. James Madison, often referred to as the father of the Constitution, wrote, "It is impossible for the man of pious reflection not to perceive in it a finger of that Almighty hand which has been so frequently and signally extended to our relief in the critical stages of the revolution" (*The Federalist*, no. 37, [New York: Nal Penguin, Inc., 1961], pp. 230-31).

Alexander Hamilton, famous as the originator of *The Federalist* papers and author of fifty-one of the essays, said: "For my own part, I sincerely esteem it a system, which without the finger of God, never could have been suggested and agreed upon by such a diversity of interest" (in *Essays on the Constitution of the United States*, ed. Paul L. Ford [Brooklyn: Historical Printing, 1892], pp. 251-52).

Charles Pinckney, a very active participant and author of the Pinckney Plan during the Convention, said: "When the great work was done and published, I was struck with amazement. Nothing less than the superintending Hand of Providence, that so miraculously carried us through the war, . . . could have brought it about

so complete, upon the whole" (in *Essays on the Constitution*, p. 412).

Within ten months, the Constitution was ratified by nine states and was therefore in force for them. Prophecy had been fulfilled.

During his first inaugural address in 1789, President George Washington, a man who was raised up by God, said: "No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand, which conducts the Affairs of men, more than the People of the United States. Every step, by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation, seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency" (*First Inaugural Address*, 30 Apr. 1789, in *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick, 34 vols. [Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939], 30:293).

In compliance with Article 6 of the Constitution, the very first act passed by Congress and signed by President Washington on June 1, 1789, was the actual oath to support the Constitution that was to be administered to various government officers.

The dedicatory prayer for the Kirtland Temple, as dictated by the Lord and found in the Doctrine and Covenants, contains these words: "May those principles, which were so honorably and nobly defended, namely, the Constitution of our land, by our fathers, be established forever" (D&C 109:54).

Temple work for Founding Fathers

Shortly after President Spencer W. Kimball became President of the Church, he assigned me to go into the vault of the St. George Temple and check the early records. As I did so, I realized the fulfillment of a dream I had had ever since learning of the visit of the Founding Fathers to the St. George Temple. I saw with my own eyes the record of the work which was done for the Founding Fathers of this great nation, beginning with George Washington.

Think of it: the Founding Fathers of this nation, those great men, appeared within those sacred walls and had their vicarious work done for them.

President Wilford Woodruff spoke of it in these words: "Before I left St. George, the spirits of the dead gathered around me, wanting to know why we did not redeem them. Said they, 'You have had the use of the Endowment House for a number of years, and yet nothing has ever been done for us. We laid the foundation of the government you now enjoy, and we never apostatized from it, but we remained true to it and were faithful to God' " (*The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, sel. G. Homer Durham [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1946], p. 160).

After he became President of the Church, President Wilford Woodruff declared that "those men who laid the foundation of this American government . . . were the best spirits the God of heaven could find on the face of the earth. They were choice spirits . . . [and] were inspired of the Lord" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1898, p. 89).

Apostasy from Constitutional principles

Unfortunately, we as a nation have apostatized in various degrees from different Constitutional principles as proclaimed by the inspired founders. We are fast approaching that moment prophesied by Joseph Smith when he said: "Even this nation will be on the very verge of crumbling to pieces and tumbling to the ground, and when the Constitution is upon the brink of ruin, this people will be the staff upon which the nation shall lean, and they shall bear the Constitution away from the very verge of destruction" (19 July 1840, as recorded by Martha Jane Knowlton Coray; ms. in Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City).

Befriend the Constitution

For centuries our forefathers suffered and sacrificed that we might be the recipients of the blessings of freedom. If they were willing to sacrifice so much to establish us as a free people, should we not be willing to do the same to maintain that freedom for ourselves and for future generations?

Only in this foreordained land, under its God-inspired Constitution and the resulting environment of freedom, was it possible to have established the restored church. It is our responsibility to see that this freedom is perpetuated so that the Church may more easily flourish in the future.

The Lord said, "Therefore, I, the Lord, justify you, and your brethren of my church, in befriending that law which is the constitutional law of the land" (D&C 98:6).

How then can we best befriend the Constitution in this critical hour and secure the blessings of liberty and ensure the protection and guidance of our Father in Heaven?

Be righteous

First and foremost, we must be righteous.

John Adams said, "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." (*The Works of John Adams*, ed. C. F. Adams [Boston: Little and Brown, 1851]). If the Constitution is to have continuance, this American nation, and especially the Latter-day Saints, must be virtuous.

The Book of Mormon warns us relative to our living in this free land: "Wherefore, this land is consecrated unto him whom he shall bring. And if it so be that they shall serve him according to the commandments which he hath given, it shall be a land of liberty unto them; wherefore, they shall never be brought down into captivity; if so, it shall be because of iniquity; for if iniquity shall abound cursed shall be the land for their sakes, but unto the righteous it shall be blessed forever" (2 Nephi 1:7).

"And now," warned Moroni, "we can behold the decrees of God concerning this land, that it is a land of promise; and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall serve God, or they shall be swept off when the fulness of his wrath shall come upon them. And the fulness of his

wrath cometh upon them when they are ripened in iniquity" (Ether 2:9).

Two great American Christian civilizations—the Jaredites and the Nephites—were swept off this land because they did not "serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ" (Ether 2:12). What will become of our civilization?

Learn Constitution's principles

Second, we must learn the principles of the Constitution in the tradition of the Founding Fathers.

Have we read *The Federalist* papers? Are we reading the Constitution and pondering it? Are we aware of its principles? Are we abiding by these principles and teaching them to others? Could we defend the Constitution? Can we recognize when a law is constitutionally unsound? Do we know what the prophets have said about the Constitution and the threats to it?

As Jefferson said, "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, . . . it expects what never was and never will be" (in *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Albert Ellery Bergh, 20 vols. [1903–5], 14:384).

Be involved in civic affairs

Third, we must become involved in civic affairs to see that we are properly represented.

The Lord said that "he holds men accountable for their acts in relation" to governments "both in making laws and administering them" (D&C 134:1). We must follow this counsel from the Lord: "Honest men and wise men should be sought for diligently, and good men and wise men ye should observe to uphold; otherwise whatsoever is less than these cometh of evil" (D&C 98:10).

Note the qualities that the Lord demands of those who are to represent us. They must be good, wise, and honest.

Vote, teach, and advise

Fourth, we must make our influence felt by our vote, our letters, our teaching, and our advice.

We must become accurately informed and then let others know how we feel. The Prophet Joseph Smith said: "It is our duty to concentrate all our influence to make popular that which is sound and good, and unpopular that which is unsound. 'Tis right, politically, for a man who has influence to use it. . . . From henceforth I will maintain all the influence I can get" (*History of the Church*, 5:286).

I have faith that the Constitution will be saved as prophesied by Joseph Smith. It will be saved by the righteous citizens of this nation who love and cherish freedom. It will be saved by enlightened members of this Church—among others—men and women who understand and abide the principles of the Constitution.

Testimony of the Constitution

I reverence the Constitution of the United States as a sacred document. To me its words are akin to the revelations of God, for God has placed His stamp of approval upon it.

I testify that the God of heaven sent some of His choicest spirits to lay

the foundation of this government, and He has now sent other choice spirits to help preserve it.

We, the blessed beneficiaries of the Constitution, face difficult days in America, "a land which is choice above all other lands" (Ether 2:10).

May God give us the faith and the courage exhibited by those patriots who pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor.

May we be equally as valiant and as free, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "Rock of Ages" without announcement.

President Hinckley

We have just heard the opening address of our beloved prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson. Following his remarks, the Mormon Youth Chorus sang for us "Rock of Ages."

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now speak to us.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

I am honored to follow President Ezra Taft Benson. I love him as my friend and leader. He is indeed our prophet, seer, and revelator.

Perseverance

In the context of my remarks today, *perseverance* means to continue in a given course until we have reached a goal or objective, regardless of obstacles, opposition, and other counter-influences. What is our course, what is our goal, and what are the obstacles and opposition that would hinder or divert us?

Our course as members of the Church should be compliance with the principles and ordinances of the gospel.

Our goal should be to fill the measure of our creation as sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father—that is, to reach exaltation and eternal life. The obstacles and opposition we meet are the temptations and enticements of Satan that are designed to frustrate the Lord's work and glory: "To bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39).

Perseverance is a positive, active characteristic. It is not idly, passively waiting and hoping for some good thing to happen. It gives us hope by helping us realize that the righteous suffer no failure except in giving up and no longer trying.

When some people have a difficult job to do, they give up everything else

until that job is finished. Others just give up. The need to persevere is expressed in the following lines:

"Genius is only the power of making continuous efforts. The line between failure and success is so fine that we scarcely know when we pass it; so fine that we are often on the line and do not know it. How many a man has thrown up his hands at a time when a little more effort, a little more patience would have achieved success. . . . A little more persistence, a little more effort, and what seemed a hopeless failure may turn into a glorious success. . . . There is no defeat except within, no really insurmountable barrier save [one's] own inherent weakness of purpose" (author unknown, in *Second Encyclopedia of Stories, Quotations, and Anecdotes*, comp. Jacob M. Braude [Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1957], p. 152).

We have numerous examples of perseverance in the scriptures, in secular history, and in our own experiences.

Job's perseverance

Perhaps the best-known Old Testament example of perseverance is the story of Job. As you know, it narrates the afflictions that befell a righteous man and considers reasons for those afflictions. It does not entirely answer the question of why Job, or anyone, might suffer pain and sorrow, but does state clearly that affliction is not necessarily a sign of God's anger and a punishment for sin, as Job's friends told him. The book suggests that affliction, if not for punishment, may be for experience, discipline, and instruction (see Bible Dictionary, LDS edition of the King James Version, s.v. "Job").

I do not know of anything that members of the Church need more than they need the conviction and perseverance of Job. He was a just man who feared God and avoided evil. After the Lord allowed Satan to torment Job, his afflictions included the loss of his

seven sons and three daughters, the loss of his wealth in flocks and herds, and serious physical illnesses. Remaining faithful to the Lord through his indescribable sorrow and suffering, Job was able to say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. . . . He also shall be my salvation. . . . For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. . . . Yet in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 13:15-16, 19:25-26).

The result of Job's perseverance is told in the conclusion of the story. The Lord blessed him with a family, good health, and great possessions. He continued in his course, despite unrelenting opposition, until he saw the Lord (see Job 42:5).

Moroni's perseverance

The Book of Mormon is filled with stories of great people who endured to the very end, from Lehi and his family through Moroni, the son of Mormon. The life of Moroni is especially instructive in teaching perseverance. The obstacles he faced may seem beyond belief to us. He saw the entire Nephite nation destroyed by the sword in a terrible war because of the wickedness of the people. His father and all of his kinsfolk and friends were slain. He was alone for about twenty years, perhaps hiding and fleeing from savage Lamanites who sought to take his life (see Mormon 8:2-7). Yet he continued to keep the record as his father had commanded him.

As a result of his perseverance and righteousness, he was ministered to by the Three Nephites, whom the Savior permitted to tarry until His second coming (see Mormon 8:11). In these latter days, Moroni had the divine commission of instructing Joseph Smith in his calling as the Prophet of the Restoration and delivering the Book of Mormon record to him.

Joseph Smith's perseverance

Joseph Smith's determination and perseverance is another good example. After reading James 1:5, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him," Joseph knew that he must do as James directed or remain in darkness and confusion. From the moment he knelt in prayer, he encountered enormous obstacles and opposition. First, an evil, unseen power seized him. Then, he wrote:

"Just at this moment of great alarm, I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun. . . .

"It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me. . . . One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—'This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!' " (Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17).

This marvelous event, near the start of the Prophet's mortal ministry, proved to be a pattern in his life. He suffered ridicule, violent attack by his enemies, betrayal by close associates whom he had trusted, forcible separation from his loved ones, trial and imprisonment on false charges, and, finally, martyrdom at the hands of a mob. Yet he remained true to the charge he had received and served faithfully in his calling as the Prophet to usher in the dispensation of the fulness of times. In addition to seeing our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, he received instruction and counsel from angels and other heavenly beings throughout his life.

Winston Churchill's perseverance

Secular history also teaches the principle of perseverance. Winston Churchill is well known for his determination as the leader of Great Britain during World War II. On one occasion

in his later years, he returned to a school where he had studied as a boy. Before he arrived, the headmaster told the students, "The greatest Britisher of our time is going to come to this school, and I want every one of you to be here with your notebooks. I want you to write down what he says, because his speech will be something for you to remember all your lives." The elderly statesman came in and was introduced. His glasses were down on the end of his nose, as usual. He stood and delivered the following words from an immortal speech that he once gave in Parliament. He said, "Never give in, *never, never, never*" (see "These Are Great Days," in *The Unrelenting Struggle: War Speeches of the Right Hon. Winston Churchill*, ed. Charles Eada [Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1942], pp. 287). His speech was unmatched. His message was indeed something to be remembered by every boy who heard it and by each of us. We must never give up, regardless of temptations, frustrations, disappointments, or discouragements.

Perseverance is vital to success

I believe that perseverance is vital to success in any endeavor, whether spiritual or temporal, large or small, public or personal. Think seriously of how important perseverance, or the lack of it, has been in your own endeavors, such as Church callings, schooling, or employment. I believe that essentially all significant achievement results largely from perseverance.

By applying this principle, some of our finest legacies have been produced. For example, John Milton was blind when he wrote *Paradise Lost*. Ludwig von Beethoven was deaf when he finished some of his greatest musical compositions. Abraham Lincoln was laughed at as a gangling, awkward country boy who had many failures; but he became one of the greatest and most eloquent presidents of the United States. Florence Nightingale devoted her life to save the lives of countless wounded soldiers. All of these people

left a permanent mark on the world. Their example should give hope to all of us. They succeeded not only because the Lord had endowed them with gifts, as he has each of us in varying degrees, but because they applied themselves steadfastly.

Jesus Christ's perseverance

Of course, the ultimate example of perseverance is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who has and will overcome every obstacle in doing the will of our Heavenly Father. Indeed, Jesus is perfect in perseverance and has taught us to be perfect even as he and his Father are perfect (see 3 Nephi 12:48). Studying his life can help us learn and live this important principle.

From the time of the premortal council, in which Jesus became the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior of all mankind, through his millennial reign, he has and will persevere in perfection, doing all that his Father commanded. Because of his love for us, he offered to fulfill the plan of salvation with these words, "Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever" (Moses 4:2). How different from Satan's response to the plan: "I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; . . . give me thine honor" (Moses 4:1). The conflict between the forces of good and the forces of evil persists in the world today—with Jesus persevering in striving to save souls, and Satan striving to destroy them.

During his mortal ministry, as the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh, Jesus again taught the gospel. At the beginning of this ministry, we see his perseverance in one of the most stirring dramas ever recorded. He completely overcame every temptation that the cunning of Satan could devise (see Matthew 4:1–11). After Jesus had fasted forty days and forty nights, gathering miraculous inner strength, came a battle of opposing powers in the wilderness of Judea. First, Satan tempted Jesus by appealing to the basic appetite

of hunger, asking him to transform stones into bread. Jesus held to his divine course and refused. Satan next tempted the Savior to cast himself down from a pinnacle of the temple, saying angels would protect him if he were the Son of God. Jesus refused this request to misuse his divine power, saying, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Matthew 4:7). Satan seldom gives up. He next appealed to a drive that causes the downfall of otherwise invulnerable individuals—the almost irresistible hunger to have great possessions. Satan showed all the kingdoms of the world and offered them to Jesus if he would worship him. Jesus commanded Satan to leave, saying, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10). This is the type of perseverance in the face of temptation that each of us can and must exercise if we are to avoid the misery of sin.

Jesus persevered through the final days of his mortal life as the mood of the people changed from shouts of "Hosanna to the Son of David" (Matthew 21:9) to cries of "Crucify him" (Mark 15:13). He endured the indignities and physical abuse of his trials before Jewish and Roman leaders. Through his atonement and resurrection, he provided for all mankind both immortality and the possibility of eternal life. He paid the penalty for our sins if we will repent of them. How grateful I am for the effect upon me of his love and his perseverance!

Probably few of us will face opposition and obstacles like those encountered by the great ones I have mentioned. However, we each have our own challenges and trials to overcome as we strive to keep on the right course. Often the most important trials are those we must face and subdue privately within our own hearts.

I bear testimony that perseverance is essential to us in learning and living the principles of the gospel and that it will determine our progress as we strive to reach exaltation. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. He directs this Church.

I am grateful to labor in his service and to be a special witness of his divinity. The gospel has been restored in these latter days through the Prophet Joseph Smith. President Ezra Taft Benson is our prophet, seer, and revelator. May we follow his stirring address this morning. I bear this testimony humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

The chorus and congregation will now join in singing "How Firm a Foundation." After that, Elder Dean L. Larsen of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy will speak to us.

The chorus and congregation sang "How Firm a Foundation."

Elder Dean L. Larsen

Staying within the mark

When I was a young man, I enjoyed participating in athletic activities of various kinds. I was never very expert in these things, but this did not diminish my interest nor the satisfaction that came from my participation. I was particularly interested in track and field events. In my school years I competed in the hurdle races as well as in the shot put and the discus throw. These last two events required that the participant launch his effort from within a ring that was marked out on the playing field. So long as the competitor remained within the ring while making his throw of the discus or the put of the shot, his effort was qualified to be measured in the competition. If he stepped outside the circle, his effort was disqualified as a foul. Generally, three preliminary attempts were permitted in each of these events, and then three more for those whose tosses were long enough to qualify them for the finals. If a competitor fouled in each of his attempts, he was out of the competition.

Those of us who participated in these sports learned the importance of staying within the mark.

Israelites looked beyond the mark

I found myself reflecting on these early experiences recently as I read from the fourth chapter of Jacob in the Book of Mormon. In this part of his record, Jacob reminds us of the Israelites in ancient times who got themselves into great difficulty: "They despised the words of plainness, and killed the prophets, and sought for things that they could not understand. Wherefore, because of their blindness, which blindness came by *looking beyond the mark*, they must needs fall" (Jacob 4:14; italics added).

Generally, a figurative expression such as the one Jacob uses in this text—"looking beyond the mark"—comes from something that is common and familiar to the experience of those with whom it is used. Each language and each culture has similar idiomatic expressions.

I have wondered what was actually in Jacob's mind as he wrote of "looking beyond the mark" in describing a failing that was common to ancient Israel. As I have already indicated, Jacob's idiom brings to my mind the experiences of my early activities in certain sports events when it

was so important to stay within the mark. All of the strength and skill and effort a competitor could muster in the field events I have just described were of little value if he did not stay within the circle.

Jacob speaks of people who placed themselves in serious jeopardy in spiritual things because they were unwilling to accept simple, basic principles of truth. They entertained and intrigued themselves with "things that they could not understand" (Jacob 4:14). They were apparently afflicted with a pseudosophistication and a snobishness that gave them a false sense of superiority over those who came among them with the Lord's words of plainness. They went beyond the mark of wisdom and prudence, and obviously failed to stay within the circle of fundamental gospel truths, which provide a basis for faith. They must have reveled in speculative and theoretical matters that obscured for them the fundamental spiritual truths. As they became infatuated by these "things that they could not understand," their comprehension of and faith in the redeeming role of a true Messiah was lost, and the purpose of life became confused. A study of Israel's history will confirm Jacob's allegations.

Paul's counsel

It seems to me that every generation faces its challenges with "looking beyond the mark." The Apostle Paul worried about those whom he had helped to develop a testimony of Jesus Christ. Paul advised Titus to "avoid foolish questions . . . and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain" (Titus 3:9).

To Timothy, Paul wrote:

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap

to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

"And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:2-4).

Earlier, Paul had counseled Timothy not to "give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith" (1 Timothy 1:4).

How to stay within the mark

As I have wondered how we might protect ourselves in the present day from "going beyond the mark," I have resolved to do several things which I share with you for whatever application you may wish to make in your own lives.

I am going to give more time and attention to the study and pondering of the scriptures themselves, rather than to the commentaries and criticisms that others have written about them. In doing this, I am going to be as open as I can be to the Spirit of the Lord so that I can understand these things for myself. Jacob said: "For the Spirit speaketh the truth and lieth not. Wherefore, it speaketh of things as they really are, and of things as they really will be; wherefore, these things are manifested unto us plainly, for the salvation of our souls" (Jacob 4:13).

I am much more concerned about understanding the admonitions of Samuel the Lamanite as he stood on the walls of the city of Zarahemla and called the rebellious Nephites to repentance than I am about identifying the location of that city in today's geography.

I am more vitally interested in what the Father and the Son commissioned Joseph Smith to do, and the fruits of his prophetic labors, than I am in whether he made mention of one divine personage or two in his initial recounting of the First Vision.

I am going to make a greater effort to be worthy of holding an ordained office in the priesthood of God, and be

less concerned about confirming the exact date and place of the appearance of Peter, James, and John to restore this divine authority and power.

I think I am going to try to keep in my mind more consistently the perfect pattern for human relationships that the Savior demonstrated in his own life and try with greater effort to emulate that pattern of caring, love, and sacrifice.

I am going to try to be more earnest in teaching what the Savior would have me teach and be less concerned about having my own biases aired. If I am going to influence others, I want to influence them toward the things that promote faith rather than to unsettle them with speculation and questions that cannot be resolved.

I think I will not want to stifle a wholesome appetite for learning, for reaching out to new levels of understanding. But as I push toward these new horizons, I will want to come back always to the circle of my established faith, and I will continually nourish that faith with a prayerful study of God's revealed truths.

In the many hours I spent as a young man practicing to perfect my skills at putting the shot to greater distances, I sometimes moved outside the ring to work on a particular technique or detail. I learned, however, that unless the new device would allow me to remain safely within the mark when the competition was on, it was of little value to me.

Analogies are seldom perfect, and the one I have used in these remarks is probably less so than most; but sometimes it is useful to analyze our situation against the background of such a simple comparison.

Focus on things of eternal value

There are other ways in which many of us often look beyond the mark.

Sometimes we focus too much of our attention and energy upon our temporal wants, not only to entertain ourselves and gratify our physical appetites, but also to gain recognition, position, and power. We can become so consumed by the pursuit of these things that we sacrifice the sweetness and enduring peace of mind that are found in spiritual well-being, in well-nurtured family relationships, and in the love and respect of friends and associates.

Too often we permit the narrow demands of our daily routine to dull our appreciation of the beauty of God's creations and the refining influences that are all about us. We fail to experience the fulfillment that comes from developing the gifts and talents with which we have been endowed. We do not draw close enough to the Lord to know him and feel of his redeeming love.

In today's complicated world with its diversity of demands and sometimes distracting voices, it is so important for us to keep our eyes upon the basic things that matter most and that will have the greatest eternal consequence for us.

May God help us to do so and to keep from looking beyond that mark, I pray earnestly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "Though Deepening Trials" without announcement.

President Hinckley

Elder Dean L. Larsen of the First Quorum of the Seventy has spoken to us, and the chorus then sang "Though Deepening Trials."

We will now be happy to hear from Elder David B. Haight of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder David B. Haight

Importance of Christian values

I have prayed for an interest in your faith and prayers, that I might say clearly what is in my heart.

James Peter Fugal was an honest man! He herded sheep much of his life in the rolling hills of Idaho—both his own sheep and sheep for others.

On one bitterly cold winter night, he was herding sheep for another man when a blizzard set in. The sheep bunched together, as sheep do, in the corner of a fenced area, and many died. Many other sheep on surrounding ranches also died that same night because of the weather.

Though the death of the sheep was no fault of his, James Fugal felt responsible and spent the next several years working and saving to repay the owner for his lost sheep.

This was the type of deep moral honor and accountability that was fostered by scripture-reading, God-fearing settlers on the early frontier.

This same desire to live Christian principles was evident in Aurelia Rogers, who was schooled on the plains and founded the Primary organization of the Church. She had a concern for the moral character and social development of children. Leaders of the Primary since Aurelia Rogers have proven to be worthy disciples and continue to teach wholesomeness, virtue, and love for one another as well as to instill a desire to understand and live by traditional values.

Recently, Sister Haight and I attended a ward sacrament meeting some distance from our home. After the sacrament, we found, to our delight, that the Primary would present the program, the theme being "We Believe in Being Honest."

I marveled at the eagerness and interest of these young children as they spoke about the fundamental principles they were learning in Primary of telling the truth, respecting the property of

others, being trustworthy, and standing for the right.

I thought of James Fugal, the humble shepherd, and how wonderful it was that these children were being taught the same values that made him a man of such noble character.

As we enjoyed the thoughtful and timely Primary presentation that emphasized these timeless moral and spiritual values, my thoughts seemed to concentrate on the similarity of two important heavenly directed events which we, as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, have special reason to be grateful for: the framing of the Constitution of the United States of America and the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ—each, in a significant way, sustaining the other. In addition to heavenly direction, both would require a membership of honest, virtuous people if their divine purposes were to be realized.

Rise and survival of America

We attribute the rise of the American nation and its survival to two vital factors. First, God aided the efforts of those who established the republic. James Madison, who is considered the father of the Constitution and to whom President Benson referred this morning, wrote, "It is impossible for the man of pious reflection not to perceive in [the Constitution] a finger of that Almighty hand which has been so frequently and signally extended to our relief in the [establishing of our republic]" (*The Federalist*, no. 37 [New York: Nal Penguin, Inc., 1961], pp. 230-31).

Second, the righteous conduct and example of its citizens. This is best expressed by Alexander Hamilton, a soldier turned statesman, who wrote that "it seems to have been reserved to the people of this country, by their conduct and example, to decide the

important question, whether societies of men are really capable or not of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend for their political constitutions on accident and force" (*The Federalist*, no. 1, p. 33).

Flourishing of the Restoration

The important human attributes needed for this new nation to really become a cooperating and workable republic of separate states would be manifested by a people who demonstrated by their lives a belief and desire to live in a society of justice for all mankind. Likewise, the Lord, through the Prophet Joseph Smith, also recognized that, like the new nation, the restored gospel would have difficulty enduring without men and women of similar integrity and conduct.

On March 1, 1842, Joseph Smith, at the request of Mr. John Wentworth, editor of a Chicago newspaper, composed thirteen brief statements known as the Articles of Faith, which summarize some of the basic doctrines of the Church. As the concluding statement, the Prophet wrote this inspired code of conduct:

"We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things" (Articles of Faith 1:13).

What an inspiring description of good people, God-fearing people, people committed to deal justly with mankind! These would be the type of people who could raise up a nation and help it survive, and the kind of people to comprehend the true gospel of Jesus Christ with the needed faith to proclaim it to the inhabitants of the earth.

We here today, and people throughout the nation and the free

world, are indebted to freedom-loving individuals everywhere who had the faith and integrity necessary to build the foundations of our societies upon fundamental moral values. Only in an atmosphere of freedom and trust could values like honesty and integrity truly flourish and thus encourage others to pursue their rights to liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Alarming decline in moral values

Therefore, it is with great alarm that we read newspaper accounts and hear daily media reports that describe the decline of moral decency and the erosion of basic ethical conduct. They detail the corrupting influence of dishonesty, from small-time, childish stealing or cheating to major embezzlement, fraud, and misappropriation of money or goods.

Headlines and feature stories dramatically demonstrate the need for honesty and integrity in family relationships, in business affairs, and in the conduct of government officials and religious ministries. Recent cover stories from major national publications with titles such as "Lying in America" (*U.S. News and World Report*, 23 Feb. 1987) and "What Ever Happened to Ethics" (*Time*, 25 May 1987) emphasize the need for public concern over the direction in which we are moving.

Public virtue, which expects men to rise above self-interest and to act in the public interest with wisdom and courage, was so evident in leaders like George Washington, who, we used to declare, could never tell a lie, and Abraham Lincoln, known as "Honest Abe." In the past few years we have seen "official after official—both on the national and the local political scene—put self-interest . . . above the larger public interest" (Charles A. Perry, "Religious Assumptions Undergird the Entire U.S. Constitution," *Deseret News*, 27 Sept. 1987, sec. B, p. 19).

"Men and women have . . . been removed from federal office and even

gone to jail in our times because they exceeded the limits set by the framers [of our Constitution and God's commandments]" (Charles A. Perry, "Religious Assumptions," p. 19).

"Situational ethics"

One reason for the decline in moral values is that the world has invented a new, constantly changing and undependable standard of moral conduct referred to as "situational ethics." Now, individuals define good and evil as being adjustable according to each situation; this is in direct contrast to the proclaimed God-given absolute standard: "Thou shalt not!"—as in "Thou shalt not steal" (Exodus 20:15).

Teach children values

A recent Gallup Poll indicates that the vast majority of Americans want schools to do two things: teach our children to speak, think, write, and count; and help them develop standards of right and wrong to guide them through life. However, some teachers avoid questions of right and wrong or remain neutral or guide children into developing their own values, which is leaving many children morally adrift.

Many of our youth have either lost the knowledge of what is right and what is wrong or were never taught these basic values. President Harold B. Lee's classic statement that "the most important of the Lord's work that you will ever do will be the work you do within the walls of your own home" is most certainly true today. "Ours is the responsibility as parents to teach our children chastity . . . [and not only to be morally clean but to be] faithful [and] valiant, striving to live [all of] the Lord's commandments" (*Strengthening the Home* [pamphlet, 1973], pp. 4, 8).

Problem of secret sin

Some adults, including public officials and civic leaders, have also

been led astray by longings for luxury and leisure.

The devastation that comes to the families and loved ones of those convicted of crimes such as stealing, fraud, misrepresentation, child abuse, sexual transgression, or other serious crimes is immeasurable. So many sorrows, heartaches, and even broken homes result from a false belief that people can set their own rules and do what they want to do as long as they don't get caught.

Individuals may deceive and even go undetected or unpunished, but they will not escape the judgments of a just God. No man can disobey the word of God and not suffer for so doing. No sin, however secret, can escape retribution and the judgment that follows such transgression.

Obey to be free and to be saved

We declare: "There is only one cure for the evils of this world, . . . and that is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and . . . obedience to [His] commandments" (Mark E. Petersen, in Conference Report, Oct. 1963, p. 122; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1963, p. 1110).

We run the risk of losing both our domestic freedom and eternal salvation if we circumvent by greed and avarice the ethical and moral strictures inherent in the Constitution of this land and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The continued survival of a free and open society is dependent upon a high degree of divinely inspired values and moral conduct, as stated by the Founding Fathers. People must have trust in their institutions and in their leaders. A great need today is for leadership that exemplifies truth, honesty, and decency in both public and private life.

Honesty is not only the best policy, as stated by Benjamin Franklin, it is the only policy!

Someone said, "We have committed the Golden Rule to memory. May we now commit it to life." The Savior's

teaching, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Matthew 7:12), should be the basis for all human relationships.

The Lord is very clear about the conduct he expects from the inhabitants of this earth. Nephi declared:

"And again, the Lord God hath commanded that men should not murder; . . . should not lie; . . . should not steal; . . . should not take the name of the Lord . . . in vain; . . . should not envy; . . . should not have malice; . . . should not contend one with another; . . . should not commit whoredoms; . . . for whoso doeth them shall perish.

"For none of these iniquities come of the Lord; for he doeth that which is good among the children of men; . . . and . . . inviteth . . . all to come unto him and partake of, his goodness" (2 Nephi 26:32–33).

Rededicate ourselves

The time is now to rededicate our lives to eternal ideals and values, to make those changes that we may need to make in our own lives and conduct to conform to the Savior's teachings.

From the beginning to the end of His ministry, Jesus asked His followers to adopt new, higher standards in contrast to their former ways. As believers, they were to live by a spiritual and moral code that would separate them not only from the rest of the world but also even from some of their traditions. He asks nothing less of those who follow Him today.

Do we really believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, and virtuous? On this test may hinge the survival of our society, our constitutional government, and our eternal salvation.

I so declare, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "Praise to the Man" without announcement.

President Hinckley

Elder David B. Haight has just spoken to us, and the chorus has sung "Praise to the Man."

Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker for this session.

Elder Boyd K. Packer

The Balm of Gilead

Some years ago, I spoke at this pulpit and entitled my talk "The Balm of Gilead." The response was surprising. That very day two lawsuits were settled. One or both of the litigants decided that what they might gain materially was not worth the cost spiritually.

I wish to repeat much of what I said then.

In ancient times there came from Gilead, beyond the Jordan, an ointment made from the gum of a tree. It was a major commodity in trade. The Ishmaelite traders who purchased Joseph from his brothers were carrying this

balm of Gilead to Egypt (see Genesis 37:25).

It became symbolic for the power to soothe and to heal.

*There is a Balm in Gilead,
To make the wounded whole,
There is a Balm in Gilead,
To heal the sin sick soul.*
(*Recreational Songs* [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1949], p. 130)

My message was then, and is now, an appeal to those who are not at peace, those whose lives are touched with bit-

terness, with hostility, or with resentment. It is a plea to those who anxiously struggle with worry, or with grief or disappointment, with guilt, or with shame.

We see so much unnecessary suffering, so many who cripple themselves spiritually carrying burdens which could be put down. Many suffer from real misfortune and injustice. Sadly, some only imagine that they do. In either case, self-inflicted penalties soon become cruel and unusual punishment.

Problems of self-justification

If the burden is guilt, then repentance is the Balm of Gilead.

Some, however, seek to cure guilt with self-justification, a quack medicine which only covers the symptoms; it will never cure the cause. Self-justification leads one to blame another for his mistakes.

For example, when you seek financial gain, you may be tempted by others to miscalculate, even ignore, risks. When things go wrong—and they can go wrong even in carefully managed affairs—some look for others to blame. They want some “deep pocket” to make them whole. They want someone else to carry their responsibility like the scapegoat of Old Testament times, which was ceremonially burdened with the sins of others and left to wander in the wilderness.

They have little difficulty finding some attorney willing to act as high priest in transferring their responsibility to someone else. They file suit with little or no merit, intending to force others to settle in order to avoid the unconscionable cost of defending themselves in court.

There is no dishonor in appealing to a court of law for either justice or protection. I refer to those who do so to justify themselves and shift their own responsibility to someone else.

Such efforts are successful often enough to permit self-serving lawyers to convince yet another client that he

need not honor his own commitments. The word *integrity* becomes tarnished by counsel and client alike. And there follows that long trail of acrimony with brother against brother over property or money.

Be careful lest you yourself become the goat and carry unseen spiritual burdens into the wilderness. More serious by far than the loss of property or money are the unseen spiritual penalties which accrue like interest on a debt which one day, in the eternal scheme of things, must surely be paid.

More painful to be the offender

I read somewhere of a young couple who settled in the wilderness. While the man cleared the land, his wife tended things about the homestead. Occasionally, the cow would get into the garden, and the husband would complain.

One day, as he left to get supplies, he said in a sarcastic way, “Do you think you’ll be able to keep the cow in while I am gone?” She thought she could; she would try.

That night a terrible storm arose. Frightened by thunder, the cow escaped into the woods. Several days later the husband returned to an empty cabin and an apologetic note: “A storm came up, and the cow got out. I am so sorry, but I think I can find her.”

He searched; neither had survived. The author concluded the incident with these words:

*Boys flying kites haul in their
white-winged birds;
You can call back your kites, but
you can't call back your words.
“Careful with fire” is good advice,
we know;
“Careful with words” is ten times
doubly so.
Thoughts unexpressed will often
fall back dead.
But God Himself can't kill them,
once they are said!*
(Will Carleton, *The First Settler's Story*)

It is painful to be the victim. But have you not yet learned how much more painful it is to be the offender?

How precious is that spiritual balm of Gilead, for there is a spirit in man.

“John, leave it alone”

There are spiritual disorders and spiritual diseases that can cause intense suffering.

If you suffer from worry, from grief or shame or jealousy or disappointment or envy, from self-recrimination or self-justification, consider this lesson taught to me many years ago by a patriarch. He was as saintly a man as I have ever known. He was steady and serene, with a deep spiritual strength that many drew upon.

He knew just how to minister to others who were suffering. On a number of occasions I was present when he gave blessings to those who were sick or who were otherwise afflicted. His was a life of service, both to the Church and to his community.

He had presided over one of the missions of the Church and always looked forward to the missionary reunions. When he was older, he was not able to drive at night, and I offered to take him to the reunions. That modest gesture was repaid a thousandfold.

On one occasion, when the Spirit was right, he gave me a lesson for my life from an experience in his own. Although I thought I had known him, he told me things about his life I would not have supposed.

He grew up in a little community with a desire to make something of himself. He struggled to get an education.

He married his sweetheart, and presently everything was just right. He was well employed, with a bright future. They were deeply in love, and she was expecting their first child.

The night the baby was to be born, there were complications. The only

doctor was somewhere in the countryside tending to the sick.

After many hours of labor, the condition of the mother-to-be became desperate.

Finally the doctor was located. In the emergency, he acted quickly and soon had things in order. The baby was born and the crisis, it appeared, was over.

Some days later, the young mother died from the very infection that the doctor had been treating at another home that night.

John's world was shattered. Everything was not right now; everything was all wrong. He had lost his wife. He had no way to tend both the baby and his work.

As the weeks wore on, his grief festered. “That doctor should not be allowed to practice,” he would say. “He brought that infection to my wife. If he had been careful, she would be alive today.”

He thought of little else, and in his bitterness, he became threatening. Today, no doubt, he would have been pressed by many others to file a malpractice suit. And there are lawyers who would see in his pitiable condition only one ingredient—money!

But that was another day, and one night a knock came at his door. A little girl said simply, “Daddy wants you to come over. He wants to talk to you.”

“Daddy” was the stake president. A grieving, heartbroken young man went to see his spiritual leader.

This spiritual shepherd had been watching his flock and had something to say to him.

The counsel from that wise servant was simply, “John, leave it alone. Nothing you do about it will bring her back. Anything you do will make it worse. John, leave it alone.”

My friend told me then that this had been his trial—his Gethsemane. How could he leave it alone? Right was right! A terrible wrong had been committed and somebody must pay for it. It was a clear case.

But he struggled in agony to get hold of himself. And finally, he determined that whatever else the issues were, he should be obedient.

Obedience is powerful spiritual medicine. It comes close to being a cure-all.

He determined to follow the counsel of that wise spiritual leader. He would leave it alone.

Then he told me, "I was an old man before I understood! It was not until I was an old man that I could finally see a poor country doctor—overworked, underpaid, run ragged from patient to patient, with little medicine, no hospital, few instruments, struggling to save lives, and succeeding for the most part.

"He had come in a moment of crisis, when two lives hung in the balance, and had acted without delay.

"I was an old man," he repeated, "before I finally understood! I would have ruined my life," he said, "and the lives of others."

Many times he had thanked the Lord on his knees for a wise spiritual leader who counseled simply, "John, leave it alone."

And that is the counsel I bring again to you. If you have a festering grudge, if you are involved in an acrimonious dispute, "Behold what the scripture says [and it says it fifty times and more]—man shall not smite, neither shall he judge; for judgment is mine, saith the Lord, and vengeance is mine also, and I will repay" (Mormon 8:20).

I say, therefore, "John, leave it alone. Mary, leave it alone."

Prayer

If you need a transfusion of spiritual strength, then just ask for it. We call that prayer. Prayer is powerful spiritual medicine. The instructions for its use are found in the scriptures.

One of our sacred hymns carries this message:

Ere you left your room this morning,

Did you think to pray? . . .

When your soul was full of sorrow,

Balm of Gilead did you borrow

At the gates of day?

Oh, how praying rests the weary!

Prayer will change the night to day.

So, when life gets dark and dreary,

Don't forget to pray.

("Did You Think to Pray?" Hymns [1985], no. 140)

Forgive others and yourself

Some frustrations we must endure without really solving the problem. Some things that ought to be put in order are not put in order because we cannot control them. Things we cannot solve, we must survive.

If you resent someone for something he has done—or failed to do—forget it.

Too often the things we carry are petty, even stupid. If you are still upset after all these years because Aunt Clara didn't come to your wedding reception, why don't you grow up and forget it?

If you brood constantly over a loss or a past mistake, look ahead—settle it.

We call that forgiveness. Forgiveness is powerful spiritual medicine. To extend forgiveness, that soothing balm, to those who have offended you is to heal. And, more difficult yet, when the need is there, forgive yourself!

I repeat, "John, leave it alone. Mary, leave it alone."

Purge and cleanse and soothe your soul and your heart and your mind and that of others.

The peace of a cleansed soul

A cloud will then be lifted, a beam cast from your eye. There will come that peace which surpasseth understanding.

The Lord said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

"If ye love me, keep my commandments.

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

"Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

"I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (John 14:15-18).

I bear witness of Him who is that comfort, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Elder Boyd K. Packer, for that impressive message.

We are grateful to the managers and operators of the many television and radio stations and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of this conference to a large audience throughout many areas of the world.

The Mormon Youth Chorus will now sing "O Divine Redeemer."

The benediction will then be given by Elder John K. Carmack of the First Quorum of the Seventy. This conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

The chorus sang "O Divine Redeemer."

Elder John K. Carmack offered the benediction.

FIRST DAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second general session of the 157th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 3, 1987, at 2:00 P.M. President Ezra Taft Benson presided, and President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music for this session was provided by a Primary children's choir from the Sandy region. Patricia Swanson conducted, and John Longhurst was at the organ.

At the beginning of the meeting, President Monson made the following remarks:

President Thomas S. Monson

My beloved brethren and sisters, President Ezra Taft Benson has asked that I conduct this, the second general session of the 157th Semiannual Gen-

eral Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We welcome all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, or radio, and many who are watching in stake centers throughout the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico, to which the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

At the same time we express our appreciation to the owners and operators of many radio and television stations and to the owners and operators of cable systems for their cooperation in making these proceedings available to members and friends of the Church in many countries.

We note that Elders Franklin D. Richards and F. Arthur Kay are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall.

The music for this session will be provided by a Primary children's choir from the Sandy Utah Region, under the

direction of Sister Patricia Swanson, with Brother John Longhurst at the organ.

The choir will begin this session by singing "Thirteenth Article of Faith: Search, Ponder, and Pray." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Angel Abrea, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Thirteenth Article of Faith: Search, Ponder, and Pray."

Elder Angel Abrea offered the invocation.

President Monson

The choir will now sing "We'll Bring the World His Truth," following which President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will present the sustaining of authorities.

The choir sang "We'll Bring the World His Truth."

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Sustaining of General Authorities and general officers

I shall now present to you the General Authorities and general officers of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain President Ezra Taft Benson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Gordon B. Hinckley as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and Thomas S. Monson as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Marion G. Romney as President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, Howard W. Hunter as Acting President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, and the following as members of the Council: Marion G. Romney, Howard W. Hunter, Boyd K. Packer, Marvin J. Ashton, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, and Joseph B. Wirthlin. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any who may feel opposed may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain the Counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It was announced a few months ago that Elder Jack H. Goasland has been released as a President of the First Quorum of the Seventy so that he may serve as President of the British Isles-Africa Area of the Church. Those who wish to extend a vote of appreciation to Elder Goasland for his dedicated service may do so by the uplifted hand.

We sustain as the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy Dean L. Larsen, Richard G. Scott, Marion D. Hanks, William Grant Bangerter, Robert L. Backman, Hugh W. Pinnock, and James M. Paramore. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain all of the other General Authorities and general officers of the Church as at present constituted. Those in favor please manifest it. Any opposed.

President Benson, it appears that the voting has been unanimous in the affirmative.

President Monson

Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker at this session.

Elder Marvin J. Ashton

"To every man is given a gift"

One of the great tragedies of life, it seems to me, is when a person classifies himself as someone who has no talents or gifts. When, in disgust or discouragement, we allow ourselves to reach depressive levels of despair because of our demeaning self-appraisal, it is a sad day for us and a sad day in the eyes of God. For us to conclude that we have no gifts when we judge ourselves by stature, intelligence, grade-point average, wealth, power, position, or external appearance is not only unfair but unreasonable.

From Doctrine and Covenants 46:11–12, we have this truth: "For all have not every gift given unto them; for there are many gifts, and to every man is given a gift by the Spirit of God.

"To some is given one, and to some is given another, that all may be profited thereby."

God has given each of us one or more special talents. Socrates made the famous statement, "The unexamined life is not worth living" ("Apology," *The Dialogues of Plato*, trans. Benjamin Jowett [Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952], p. 210). It is up to each of us to search for and build upon the gifts which God has given. We must remember that each of us is made in the image of God, that there are no unimportant persons. Everyone matters to God and to his fellowmen.

Less-conspicuous gifts

From the Book of Mormon, particularly 3 Nephi, chapters 11 through 26, when the Savior Jesus Christ showed himself to the people on the

American continent, many gifts are referred to as being very real and most useful. Taken at random, let me mention a few gifts that are not always evident or noteworthy but that are very important. Among these may be your gifts—gifts not so evident but nevertheless real and valuable.

Let us review some of these less-conspicuous gifts: the gift of asking; the gift of listening; the gift of hearing and using a still, small voice; the gift of being able to weep; the gift of avoiding contention; the gift of being agreeable; the gift of avoiding vain repetition; the gift of seeking that which is righteous; the gift of not passing judgment; the gift of looking to God for guidance; the gift of being a disciple; the gift of caring for others; the gift of being able to ponder; the gift of offering prayer; the gift of bearing a mighty testimony; and the gift of receiving the Holy Ghost.

We must remember that to every man is given a gift by the Spirit of God. It is our right and responsibility to accept our gifts and to share them. God's gifts and powers are available to all of us.

Time will permit my emphasizing only a few of these God-given gifts.

The gift of pondering

As I study the scriptures, I am challenged and moved by the word *ponder* used so frequently in the Book of Mormon. Dictionaries say that *ponder* means to weigh mentally, think deeply about, deliberate, meditate.

When Jesus Christ came to teach the Nephites, he said, "Therefore, go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon the things which I have said, and ask of

the Father, in my name, that ye may understand, and prepare your minds for the morrow, and I come unto you again" (3 Nephi 17:3).

Moroni used this term as he closed his record. "Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, . . . ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, . . . and ponder it in your hearts" (Moroni 10:3).

By pondering, we give the Spirit an opportunity to impress and direct. Pondering is a powerful link between the heart and the mind. As we read the scriptures, our hearts and minds are touched. If we use the gift to ponder, we can take these eternal truths and realize how we can incorporate them into our daily actions.

Today, millions, at President Benson's encouragement, are reading the Book of Mormon, some for the first time, others as a regular habit. We must remind all that the fruits of this great book are the most beneficial when we ponder as we read.

Pondering is a progressive mental pursuit. It is a great gift to those who have learned to use it. We find understanding, insight, and practical application if we will use the gift of pondering.

Look to God for direction

How often have we ourselves said or have heard others exclaim in times of crisis or trouble, "I just don't know where to turn"?

If we will just use it, there is a gift available to all of us—the gift of looking to God for direction. Here is an avenue of strength, comfort, and guidance.

"Behold, I am the law, and the light. Look unto me, and endure to the end, and ye shall live; for unto him that endureth to the end will I give eternal life" (3 Nephi 15:9).

"Look to God and live." This is the wonderful promise given so often in the scriptures.

If we look to God for guidance, what do we look for in his children that we may be profited thereby? Some of

us seem to prefer the practice of looking for and pointing out the weaknesses of our associates. The gifts others have, not their failings, make it possible for all to profit thereby.

What a spiritual comfort and blessing it is to know that, if we look to our Savior Jesus Christ and endure to the end, eternal life and exaltation can be ours. Our capacity to see and comprehend is increased only in proportion to our willingness to look. God becomes more approachable as we look to him. Looking to God teaches us to serve and live without compulsion. Being a leader in the Church should never diminish our "looking to God" time.

Hear and heed the small voice

Still, small heavenly voices penetrate the heart with their gentle, convincing declarations:

"And it came to pass that while they were thus conversing one with another, they heard a voice as if it came out of heaven; and they cast their eyes round about, for they understood not the voice which they heard; and it was not a harsh voice, neither was it a loud voice; nevertheless, and notwithstanding it being a small voice it did pierce them that did hear to the center, inasmuch that there was no part of their frame that it did not cause to quake; yea, it did pierce them to the very soul, and did cause their hearts to burn" (3 Nephi 11:3).

Most often, hope, encouragement, and direction come from a soft, piercing voice.

Small voices are heard only by those who are willing to listen. Soft and small voice communications with our associates make priceless friendships possible. I am appreciative of people who find no need to raise their voices as they try to impress or convince. It seems most people who argue and shout have ceased listening to what the small voice could powerfully contribute.

We love the small voice of a child saying, "Mommy, Daddy, I love you."

How powerful is a small voice that knows how and when to say, "Thank you."

Think of the heavenly voice saying, Joseph, this is my beloved son. Hear him (see Joseph Smith—History 1:17).

It is heartwarming and reassuring to hear the small voice declare, "Be still and know" (D&C 101:16).

Remember that one of our greatest gifts is the small voice of the Holy Ghost whispering directions in our lives and making mighty testimonies possible.

The gift of calming others

What a majestic gift it is to be able to calm others! We thank God for those who are calm instead of contentious.

"For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another" (3 Nephi 11:29).

Contention is a tool of the adversary. Peace is a tool of our Savior. What a wonderful tribute we pay people when we describe them as being gentle, firm, and calm!

Contention stops progress. Love brings eternal progression.

Where contention prevails, there can be no united effort in any purposeful direction.

"Cease to contend one with another; cease to speak evil one of another" (D&C 136:23).

Argument and debate must be supplanted by calm discussion, study, listening, and negotiation.

The gospel is one of harmony, unity, and agreement. It must be presented in love, and with glad tidings, by those who are calm.

We should learn to talk together, listen together, pray together, decide together, and avoid all forms of possible contention. We must learn to curb anger. Satan knows that when conten-

tion begins, orderly progress is thwarted.

There has never been a time when it is more important for us as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to take a stand, remain firm in our convictions, and conduct ourselves with calm assurance under all circumstances. We must not be manipulated or enraged by those who subtly foster contention over issues of the day.

"Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away" (3 Nephi 11:30).

"Ye should live in peace one with another" (Mosiah 2:20). Those with the gift of being calm make lasting peace possible.

The gift of caring

How grateful we should be for families, friends, and organizations who care! They make life easier and more meaningful. They, too, reap rewards in their Christlike caring when they serve for the right reasons. Leaders on every level should be primarily interested in rendering compassionate caring for others.

"And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17).

Our Savior cares for all of his sheep. What a tribute it is to be recognized as one who cares. Let me share with you a story about the quiet caring of an unusual person who was brought to my attention during the last few weeks.

"Best Scouter Ever"

Recently, during a twenty-fifth anniversary ward reunion in the Salt Lake Valley, a "Best Scouter Ever" award was presented. The special eve-

ning in the cultural hall, which included dinner as well as a fine program, drew many people back to the ward event because of the good feelings created over the past twenty-five years.

The person acting as master of ceremonies introduced a young man to make this special award. He looked to be about six feet four inches tall and well over two hundred pounds. He walked to the microphone and said, "We would now like to pay tribute to the best Scouter this ward has ever had."

Immediately names and faces of past Scout leaders jumped into the minds of those attending. Who would it be? There had been many great Scoutmasters in this ward. How could those in charge decide?

The tall, handsome young man mentioned many names of past Scout leaders and then said, "No, it is none of these, though they have all been great Scouters. Our ward 'Best Scouter Ever' award goes to someone who has worked in the Primary and as a Scout leader teaching boys for forty years. This individual has received the Silver Beaver Award, one of the highest awards given in Scouting, and the Silver Beehive Award, the highest award given by the Church in Scouting." Then with a voice that trembled slightly, he said, "Our 'Best Scouter Ever' recognition goes to Sister Jennie Verl Keefer." There came a hush over the audience, then knowing voices of approval, then a burst of applause that seemed to go on forever.

Sister Keefer was called up to the front. All present intently watched her quietly make her way. From the back of the room, this gray-haired bundle of energy hesitatingly came forward, her five-foot frame barely taller than those who were seated. Once at the microphone, the surprised recipient expressed a quiet and emotional, yet firm, thanks. She said between tears of gratitude it wasn't quite forty years she had served. It was only thirty-seven years. And then Sister Keefer proudly added

that during all her time of service, she had never had a bad boy.

Then the presenter asked all those whom Sister Keefer had ever taught and cared for to come to the stage. Here was the amazing thing. Men and boys started from the audience and filled the space behind this tiny woman. Big men, men in suits, doctors, bishops, presidents of companies, husbands, fathers holding babies, returned missionaries, contractors, computer workers, dentists, carpenters, and more. All these Scouts had been boys touched by the service and caring of this one noble and great woman—the best Scouter ever in the ward's entire history. She had the gift of caring, and here were some of the fruits of her labors. Generations yet to come will bless her name for what she has done. What a great gift have those who know how to care!

Develop and share gifts

"And to every man is given a gift" (D&C 46:11). This is true. God help us to recognize, develop, and share our gifts that all may profit thereby is my earnest hope and plea.

God does live. He does bless us with gifts. As we develop and share our God-given gifts and benefit from the gifts of those around us, the world can be a better place and God's work will move forward at a more rapid pace. To these truths I bear my testimony and leave my personal witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Marvin J. Ashton, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just spoken to us. Thank you for that tribute to a Scouter, Brother Ashton.

We shall now be pleased to listen to two of the Brethren who were sustained as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy at April conference: first, from the land of the long white cloud, way down in New Zealand,

Elder Douglas J. Martin; and then, from our neighbor to the north, the

dominion of Canada, Elder Alexander B. Morrison.

Elder Douglas J. Martin

Heed the Spirit's whisperings to serve

My dear brethren and sisters, several years ago in general conference, I listened as President Kimball encouraged those who had reared their families to sell their camper vans, leave their grandchildren behind, and, for a year or two, give their lives to the service of the Savior Jesus Christ in the mission field. His comments struck a chord in me, and when I returned home to New Zealand, I repeated what he said to my wife.

We decided that we would make our plans to be ready to serve by retiring a little earlier than we otherwise might have, and to do this when I turned sixty in April 1987. We told our sons, and while they said little, they were attuned to and supported us in our desires. I likewise informed my business colleagues three or four years ahead of time.

As 1987 approached, all our plans were falling neatly into place. I anticipated several months of doing many pleasant things, of which I had dreamed for years. Then in time, our mission call would come.

One day in late March of this year, however, I received a phone call that resulted in our coming to general conference in Salt Lake City ahead of that planned retirement date in April.

How grateful we are that we heeded the whisperings of the Spirit when listening to President Kimball several years ago!

There must be many in different nations in the Church today who are of similar age to ourselves and whose circumstances likewise are the same as ours. Perhaps that same still small voice may also be whispering to you. As it comes, remember the promise

given in revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith, "And now, verily, verily, I say unto thee, put your trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good" (D&C 11:12).

Service in the Philippines

Now my wife and I are in the service of the Lord and have been assigned to labor in the islands of the Philippines, Micronesia, and Guam. We are only one month old in our service and our lives have been completely turned around. We went from winter to summer in just twelve hours, and from New Zealand lamb to a delightful fish called *lapu lapu*. We met a typically slender, dark-haired Filipino stake president who quietly responded, "I am the same age as you, Elder Martin."

Soon after our arrival in the Philippines, we left for our first stake conference some one hundred kilometers north. Along the way, we saw the evidence of poverty among so many of those lovely people. This also was a new experience, and our hearts were heavy as we drove. We checked in at a small hotel in a distant town and soon discovered that it lacked many of the facilities we considered normal and were used to. Then suddenly, as we entered the immaculate chapel grounds, our spirits lifted. We were greeted by sunny, smiling faces and outstretched hands, spotless dresses and shirts of dazzling white. We were not strangers or foreigners, but fellow-citizens with these Saints and of the household of God. Soon to follow was my most unforgettable Philippine experience thus far.

As we moved along the line exchanging handshakes and greetings, one slight young woman shyly extended her arm. As I took it, I realized

that she had no hand on it or on her other arm. We exchanged smiles and moved along.

I next encountered this young sister after she and her husband were invited to speak as a young couple married within the last eighteen months in the Manila Temple. When she arose to speak, I noticed that in addition to being born without hands, this young woman had an artificial leg. As first she and then her husband spoke, there unfolded a most remarkable story about their lives.

The stake president was her father. Despite what to others may have been a handicap, but what to her must have been only a difficulty, this young sister had completed a full-term proselyting mission. She described in beautiful terms her feelings about going to the Manila Temple to be married. Hers was a talk of such maturity in gospel understanding and humility that it would have been difficult to equal anywhere in the Church. Then her husband stood and told of how he had written to his girlfriend after being in the mission field two months and later toward the end, of how he wanted to marry her in the Manila Temple when he returned home. There were no second thoughts, no change of heart when far removed, but instead, a growing understanding of the meaning and blessing of temple marriage for them both.

As they proudly showed us their baby after conference, and when we considered the splendid achievements of this young husband and wife, we recalled the Savior's words, "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11:28).

Missionary couples are blessed

Since then, we have been to different places in the Philippines. Everywhere we meet missionary couples, a number of whom are older than ourselves. The Johnsons, a couple from Fremont, California, labor in distant

Vigan. They have been in the Church only a handful of years since their baptism. In Vigan, the carabao, or water buffalo, and motor tricycles are almost the only mode of transport. The Johnsons have a beautiful attitude.

Whenever I meet and talk with missionary couples, I am filled with love and respect for their humility and desire to help the Filipino Saints. They regard their missions as one of the great opportunities to serve the Master in their lives. They always ask, "How many grandchildren have you?" Our response of eight is quickly overshadowed with "We have sixteen," or "twenty-three," or maybe "twenty-seven," and almost always with "And there are two we haven't seen yet." They miss their family and grandchildren, but don't complain. Instead, they look forward to that great homecoming reunion. Meanwhile, they are given all the love they can absorb from devoted Filipino Saints.

Like us, all these missionary couples are finding new purpose and fulfillment in their lives. Section 4 of the Doctrine and Covenants is taking on new meaning.

"Therefore, if ye have desires to serve God ye are called to the work;

"For behold the field is white already to harvest; and lo, he that thrusteth in his sickle with his might, the same layeth up in store that he perisheth not, but bringeth salvation to his soul" (vs. 3-4).

I pray that couples whose families are grown may indeed listen to and obey the Spirit that prompts the call to prepare and serve the Lord in the mission field. I know that this is the Lord's church, that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, and that President Benson is God's prophet on earth today. I am grateful to be a member of the Church and for all the blessings it has brought into my life and the lives of my family. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Alexander B. Morrison

Come unto Christ

The prophets proclaim and the scriptures sweetly certify that all men and women, if they are to achieve true happiness, must "come unto Christ, and be perfected in him" (Moroni 10:32). Indeed, that is the very purpose of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—to invite, encourage, and assist all of God's children, both living and dead, to come to Christ and "lay hold upon every good gift" (Moroni 10:30), that "ye may receive a remission of your sins, and be filled with the Holy Ghost, that ye may be numbered with my people who are of the house of Israel" (3 Nephi 30:2).

That is why we do missionary work. That divine purpose explains why the risen Savior proclaimed to his chosen Apostles that they, after receiving the Holy Ghost, should be witnesses unto him "both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

The gospel light is bursting upon Africa

That phrase, "unto the uttermost part of the earth," was very much in my mind a few weeks ago as I was privileged to accompany Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Council of the Twelve to a great, green land I dearly love—the continent of Africa. Under authority of the holy Apostleship, Elder Ashton dedicated two west African countries—Liberia and Ivory Coast—and one in central Africa—Zaire—to the work of the Lord and the preaching of the fulness of the gospel of Christ. Those countries join others in so-called "Black Africa," where the great work of bringing souls to Christ has already commenced. The time of harvest has come. We are witnessing the dawning of a new day, the beginning of a new era in Africa.

In his great hymn of the Restoration, Parley P. Pratt, an Apostle of earlier days, portrayed with poetic passion his glorious vision of this great latter-day work:

*The morning breaks, the shadows
flee;
Lo, Zion's standard is unfurled!
The dawning of a brighter
day . . .
Majestic rises on the world.
("The Morning Breaks," Hymns
[1985], no. 1)*

How fully those words apply to Africa! The light of the fulness of the gospel of Christ, like a beam of transcendent clarity and effulgent beauty, is bursting majestic upon those ancient lands and peoples. It dispels the spiritual gloom and drives away the shadows of error and superstition which long have lain over the "dark continent." It falls on a prepared people—a people prepared by the Spirit of God. The words of Alma, uttered in a different context, come to mind:

"The Lord did pour out his Spirit on all the face of the land to prepare the minds of the children of men, or to prepare their hearts to receive the word which should be taught among them. . . .

"That they might not be hardened against the word, that they might not be unbelieving, and go on to destruction, but that they might receive the word with joy, and as a branch be grafted into the true vine, that they might enter into the rest of the Lord their God" (Alma 16:16–17).

The African people are prepared

Our black African brothers and sisters truly "receive the word with joy." Anxious to learn and quick to understand, attentive and responsive, spiritually sensitive, thirsty for the living water and hungry for the bread of

life, they long have been in preparation for this day. If the price of spirituality be suffering and affliction, travail and sorrow, our humble African brothers and sisters are well prepared to receive and obey the fulness of the gospel of Christ. The vast majority are very poor; famine and pestilence dog their steps and visit their homes regularly. Opportunities for education and employment are extremely limited.

But through it all they are a happy people, generous and loving, anxious to learn and eager to obey the commandments of Christ. Among them, there is a great understanding of the importance of families. If one works, a dozen eat. Many in more technologically advanced societies have forgotten what the simplest of African peasants well knows: families are the fundamental building blocks upon which any society must be erected, if it is long to endure.

Pioneering spirit still lives

We Latter-day Saints take justifiable pride in our great pioneer heritage—in those hearty, courageous pioneers who, under conditions of great hardship and sacrifice, laid the foundation for further growth of the Church. How fortunate we are that the pioneering spirit lives on today! In every corner of Africa, there are faithful expatriate members of the Church, non-Africans who live and work there and are believing and behaving Latter-day Saints. They hail from many lands.

I testify they are not there by chance. As part of God's great and grand design for growth, they have been placed on the frontiers of the Church by divine providence, to serve as "nursing fathers" and "nursing mothers" (1 Nephi 21:23)—foci of strength around which the Church can grow. They are the right people at the right place and at the right time in history. Theirs is a mission of love and service.

Increasingly, they are being joined by wonderful missionaries, many of them retired couples from

North America and Europe, rich in Church experience and anxious to serve in a spirit of high adventure and sacrifice. The need for additional missionary couples to work in Africa is great, the rewards of such service sublime and eternal.

God loves all his children

The bursting of the gospel light upon Africa is a great manifestation and testimony of God's love for all of his children. In the words of the Nephite prophet Ammon, He is "mindful of every people, whatsoever land they may be in; yea, he numbereth his people, and his bowels of mercy are over all the earth" (Alma 26:37).

We know from the testimony of Peter that "God is no respecter of persons:

"But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34-35).

Nephi recorded that "the Lord esteemeth all flesh in one; he that is righteous is favored of God" (1 Nephi 17:35), for "he doeth that which is good among the children of men; and he doeth nothing save it be plain unto the children of men; and he inviteth them *all* to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth *none* that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; . . . and *all* are alike unto God" (2 Nephi 26:33; italics added).

"He gathereth his children from the four quarters of the earth; and he numbereth his sheep, and they know him; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd; and he shall feed his sheep, and in him they shall find pasture" (1 Nephi 22:25).

The gleanings and gathering of the children of God in Africa is just beginning. In the words of the Prophet Joseph, it will go forward "boldly, nobly, and independent, till . . . [the truth of God has] swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the

work is done" (*History of the Church*, 4:540). Of that I humbly testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elders Douglas J. Martin and Alexander B. Morrison have just addressed us.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "I Am a Child

of God," following which Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone of the First Quorum of the Seventy will speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "I Am a Child of God."

Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone

A champion of youth

In 1968 at the MIA June conference, Elder Harold B. Lee gave a marvelous talk which he entitled *A Leader—The Champion of Youth* (Salt Lake City: Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association, 1968). Since having heard and read the talk, I would like not only to address my remarks to that subject but to qualify as champion of and for the youth.

I recall the story of a teacher helping a young student on with his galoshes. They seemed smaller than his shoes. She got down on both knees and pushed, pulled, and stretched one boot until she finally got it on. Then she went through the same struggle and finally got the other one on. As she finally finished pulling it on, he said, "These are not my galoshes." The teacher pulled and struggled and finally got them off. Then he said, "They are my sister's, but my mother made me wear them."

Some who work with youth may feel that they do not "fit" the calling. It is not always comfortable to work with the youth, but for me, as God is my witness, I love them.

At an encampment in Finland, the Scouts decided I should know how to sauna. Finns heat their saunas to 170 or 180 degrees. President Olli Roto, the stake president who was teaching me, along with the Scouts, who were experts, made a small bundle of birch branches. When we really began to

perspire, he took the bundle of birch leaves and swatted me all over my back, chest, and legs, and said, "That brings the blood to the surface." I said, "It works." Then we ran down and dove into the Baltic Sea, then went back into the sauna. It's amazing what we learn when we're working with youth.

Help wayward youth

Elder Orson F. Whitney said: "You parents of the wilful and the wayward! Don't give them up. Don't cast them off. They are not utterly lost. The Shepherd will find his sheep. They were his before they were yours—long before he entrusted them to your care; and you cannot begin to love them as he loves them. They have but strayed in ignorance from the Path of Right, and God is merciful to ignorance. Only the fulness of knowledge brings the fulness of accountability. Our Heavenly Father is far more merciful, infinitely more charitable, than even the best of his servants, and the Everlasting Gospel is mightier in power to save than our narrow finite minds can comprehend" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1929, p. 110).

Elder Lee in his talk referred to Horace Mann, who was "called to dedicate a great school for boys. . . . He said, 'If this school costing all the millions that it has cost is able to save but one boy, it is worth all that it has cost.' One of his friends said to him after the

meeting, 'You let your enthusiasm run away with you, didn't you? You don't mean that the millions we have spent here would be worth it all if we saved just one boy.' Horace Mann looked at him and replied, 'No, my friend, it wouldn't be too much to spend if that one boy were my son.'"

Then Elder Lee with great power and emotion said: "I want to tell you it wouldn't be too much if that were one of my grandsons. They're precious to me and some of them are stubborn, hard-headed, and rascals just like their grandfather, hard to manage and difficult. If somebody, please, God, would just steer them past this dangerous age so that maybe they will find themselves like someone tried to help me when I was at that dangerous age, I would be most grateful" (*A Leader—The Champion of Youth*, p. 3).

A powerful force for good

The youth of today are wonderful. Elder L. Tom Perry, the Utah South Area Presidency, and the Young Women presidency recently held meetings for all the seminary students in the Salt Lake area. In Salt Lake City, youth filled the Tabernacle, the Assembly Hall, and the Salt Palace auditorium, and 4,000 youth crowded the grounds of Temple Square and listened to the public address system. We had 23,000 young people in the Marriott Center at BYU, 3,200 at Dixie College, and over 3,000 at Snow College. The total count exceeded the number of seminary students enrolled by 5,000.

We invited this marvelous modern army of Israel to put on the armor of God, to stand for truth, and to become a marvelous, forceful influence against immorality, drugs, and indulgence. The response has been wonderful. The youth of the Church are one of the most powerful forces for good on the earth today.

A chosen generation

It is not difficult to understand why the great God in heaven has reserved these special spirits for the final work of the kingdom prior to his millennial reign.

My heart, like Enoch's, seems to swell "wide as eternity" (Moses 7:41) as I consider what our youth and those being born in this time will accomplish. This generation will face trials and troubles that will exceed those of their pioneer forebears. Our generation has had some periods of respite from the foe. The future generation will have little or none. But their great faith in the Lord will give them needed strength.

Our youth influence their peer groups for good. President Wilford Woodruff said in a general conference in 1898, "Concerning the work of the dead, the Prophet Joseph Smith said that in the resurrection those who had been worked for would fall at the feet of those who had done their work, kiss their feet, embrace their knees and manifest the most exquisite gratitude." I believe our youth will rescue an entire generation. Their work will bring these same feelings and emotions from parents and grandparents of those spiritually rescued.

I believe the promise of Ammon to his brethren applies to the youth today. In the 26th chapter of Alma we read: "Yea, they shall not be beaten down by the storm at the last day; yea, neither shall they be harrowed up by the whirlwinds; but when the storm cometh they shall be gathered together in their place, that the storm cannot penetrate to them; yea, neither shall they be driven with fierce winds whithersoever the enemy listeth to carry them."

"But behold, they are in the hands of the Lord of the harvest, and they are his; and he will raise them up at the last day" (vs. 6-7).

This is a chosen generation.

Love your brothers and sisters

Some time back, I was in Raymond, Alberta, Canada. Debbie, a beautiful teenage girl, spoke at stake conference. Among other things she said, "I want to tell you about a friend I had when I went through high school." She said she felt homely but her friend told her she was beautiful. When there were dances, he would dance with her. He built her up. She said: "He was my very best friend. He was handsome and popular, and he lived his religion. I never heard him swear, he never violated the Word of Wisdom, and he faithfully went to church."

"It was a good thing that he was a strong member of the Church," she said, "because I tailed him everywhere he went. I did what he did, and I would have followed him anywhere. I cannot express the love and respect I have for him. I was not his girlfriend, but I sure loved him. He is on a mission now, and we write regularly. He still loves me and is still my best friend. He is my older brother."

What a blessing it is to the Church when brothers and sisters are filled with that kind of love and respect for each other!

Divine nature and roles of young men and women

In April 1945 Elder Harold B. Lee talked about our young men in the military. He said, "I listened to a doctor recently who said that the medical journals reported that the boys who had become mentally unbalanced in large majority [in World War II], were the boys who had broken homes, whose wives or sweethearts had been unfaithful at home." Then he said this: "We have heard much in this conference about our boys. We have heard but little about our girls" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1945, p. 165).

Thank God for great women like President Dwan Young and President Ardeth Kapp, who are great champions of youth. These are wonderful, noble,

great women with vision and understanding.

Women are endowed with special traits and attributes that come trailing down through eternity from a divine mother. A young woman has special God-given feelings about charity, love, and obedience. Coarseness and vulgarity are contrary to their natures. They have a modifying, softening influence on young men. Young women were not foreordained to do what priesthood holders do. Theirs is a sacred, God-given role, and the traits they received from heavenly mother are equally as important as those given to the young men.

Sometimes misguided women or men direct our youth away from their divinely appointed role. Worlds without end, men will never be able to bear children. Every young woman may be a procreator with God and carry a little one under her breast either in this life or in the eternal worlds. Motherhood is a wonderful, priceless blessing, no matter what all the world may say. Priesthood ordination is a blessing to men. There are serious consequences when either motherhood or priesthood is abused or laid aside.

Church leaders are champions of youth

All of the prophets have been champions of youth, but I think our beloved prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson, stands at the pinnacle of those who love, defend, and champion our youth. Who will ever forget President Benson's marvelous recent counsel to the young men and the young women of the Church? Both of these talks have been distributed to the Church in pamphlet form (see *To Young Men of the Priesthood* [1986] and *To the Young Women of the Church* [1986]).

President Gordon B. Hinckley, during the February 1985 Diamond Jubilee of Scouting in America, said:

"What a wonderful thing it is to plant in the heart of a boy the compelling axiom—'Be prepared.' Be prepared for what? For tying knots, yes.

Knot tying is Tenderfoot duty, but it is important. In one sense this whole business of living and doing is one of tying knots, the kind of knots that will hold and not give under stress and strain. We see all around us the evidence of failure, of knots that slipped when they should have held. They are evident in career failures, in business failures, in professional failures, in marriage failures. To be able to tie the right knot for the right reason, for the right occasion, and to have it hold against every stress is a part of the process of being prepared" (Boy Scouts Program, 10 Feb. 1985).

And President Thomas S. Monson's entire life has been committed to the youth. He sits on the National Executive Board of the Boy Scouts of America. His talks over the years have reflected a special love for youth. Who will ever forget his talk " 'Run, Boy, Run' " (in Conference Report, Oct. 1982, pp. 25-29; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, pp. 19-21).

Donald Dowdle, a great friend of mine, sat in a meeting years back. A young counselor in the stake presidency, Thomas S. Monson, had just concluded speaking. The old patriarch in the stake stood up in the congregation and said, "Thomas Monson will sit in the Quorum of Twelve Apostles." Then he sat down. Indeed, Thomas Monson would and has. And what a towering champion of youth he has been!

That great American philosopher Yogi Berra said, "Good pitching is better than good batting, and vice versa." He also said, "If you don't know where you are going, you are liable to end up some place else."

Lord Baden-Powell's message to Scouts

I think Lord Baden-Powell was endowed from on high with a fire burning in his bosom for the youth. He wanted them to know where they were going. He was another great champion of youth. He wrote what he called his

farewell message to Scouts of the world:

"Dear Scouts:

"If you have ever seen the play 'Peter Pan' you will remember how the pirate chief was always making his dying speech because he was afraid that possibly when the time came for him to die he might not have time to get it off his chest. It is much the same with me, and so, although I am not at this moment dying, I shall be doing so one of these days and I want to send you a parting word of good-bye.

"Remember, it is the last you will ever hear from me, so think it over.

"I have had a most happy life and I want each one of you to have as happy a life too.

"I believe that God put us in this jolly world to be happy and enjoy life. Happiness doesn't come from being rich, nor merely from being successful in your career, nor by self-indulgence. One step towards happiness is to make yourself healthy and strong while you are a boy, so that you can be useful and so can enjoy life when you are a man.

"Nature study will show you how full of beautiful and wonderful things God has made the world for you to enjoy. Be contented with what you have got and make the best of it. Look on the bright side of things instead of the gloomy one.

"But the real way to get happiness is by giving out happiness to other people. Try and leave this world a little better than you found it and when your turn comes to die, you can die happy in feeling that at any rate you have not wasted your time but have *done your best*. 'Be Prepared' in this way, to live happy and to die happy—stick to your Scout promise always—even after you have ceased to be a boy—and God help you to do it. Your friend, Robert Baden-Powell" (in *Baden-Powell*, E. E. Reynolds [New York: Oxford University Press, 1957], p. 264).

Prepare to do most important work

Now to my young friends also, from one who loves you:

What you do now, today, may have far-reaching consequences. I believe today's Aaronic Priesthood and young women of the Church will lead the youth of the world through the most trying time in history. It is time for the Aaronic Priesthood to come of age. The rod of iron leading to the tree of life for you, our young men, may well be the implementation of the complete and full work of the Aaronic Priesthood. As we marshal your forces in your true identity as deacons, teachers, and priests in the holy Aaronic Priesthood, we mobilize an army of Israel such as has never been known before in the Church. Your numbers are legion. I believe you will be expected to perform the most important work in this dispensation, with the exception of the work done by the Prophet Joseph Smith.

President Spencer W. Kimball said: "When I read Church history, I am amazed at the boldness of the early brethren as they went out into the world. They seemed to find a way. Even in persecution and hardship, they went and opened doors which evidently had been allowed to sag on their hinges and many of them to close. . . .

"These men of valor began to walk the earth with dignity and honor, with mantles on their shoulders, and keys in their hands and love in their hearts" (Regional Representatives' seminar, 4 Apr. 1974, p. 9).

My faithful young friends, you can match their boldness stride for stride. You can walk with equal dignity and honor, with the mantle on your shoulders and keys in your hands and love in your hearts.

Then we will exclaim as did Ammon: "Therefore, let us glory . . . in the Lord; yea, we will rejoice, for our joy is full; yea, we will praise our God forever. Behold, who can glory too much in the Lord? Yea, who can say too much of his great power, and of his mercy, and of his long-suffering towards the children of men? Behold, I say unto you, I cannot say the smallest part which I feel" (Alma 26:16).

I know of no more glorious work. As God is my witness, I love it with every particle of my heart and soul, and I love him with even more than my life. I hold it a high honor to walk by your side as a true and loyal champion of youth.

God bless you, youth of the noble birthright, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone of the First Quorum of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

We shall now hear from Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

The assurance that God lives

What John and Paul wrote about God's creations and the plurality of worlds, the restored gospel grandly affirms, declaring that "worlds without number" have been created (Moses 1:33; see also John 1:3; Hebrews 1:2, 11:3; D&C 93:10). These gospel truths are very significant assurances for us, situated as we are on this tiny "speck of sand" at the outer edge of a minor gal-

axy, the Milky Way. Without the gospel's fullness, we would appear to be living during one tick of the geological clock and in the midst of unexplained vastness.

Nevertheless, our focus is to be on this planet, just as the Lord told Moses:

"But only an account of this earth, and the inhabitants thereof, give I unto you. For behold, there are many worlds that have passed away. . . . Innumerable are they unto man; but all things

are numbered unto me, for they are mine and I know them" (Moses 1:35).

Enoch, to whom the Lord revealed so much, praised God amid His vast creations, exclaiming reassuredly, "Yet thou art there" (Moses 7:30; see also Jeremiah 10:12).

This same special assurance can see each of us through all the seasons and circumstances of our lives. A universal God is actually involved with our small, individual universes of experience! In the midst of His vast dominions, yet He numbers us, knows us, and loves us perfectly (see Moses 1:35, John 10:14).

Know God and his plan for us

Along with knowing that God is there, it is equally vital to know what He is like, including His perfected attributes of justice and mercy. More mortals die in ignorance of God's true character than die in actual defiance of Him. Belief in the goodness and power of God is greatly facilitated by understanding His plan of salvation with its crucial allowance for mankind's moral agency, real moral agency—with real mistakes and with real consequences! His plan includes real tests, real dilemmas, real anguish, and real joy.

Even though he knew he had been called personally by a personal God, Enoch wrestled with feelings of personal inadequacy (see Moses 6:31). Enoch also wept over the human condition, but he was told, "Lift up your heart, and be glad; and look" (Moses 7:44). If Enoch had not looked and been spiritually informed, he would have seen the human condition in isolation from the grand reality. If God were not there, Enoch's "Why?" would have become an unanswered scream of despair!

At first, Enoch refused "to be comforted" (Moses 7:44). Finally, he saw God's plan, the later coming of the Messiah in the meridian of time, and the eventual triumph of God's pur-

poses. Enoch saw how the throne of God features justice and mercy (see Moses 7:31).

Significantly, the consequences of misused human agency were explained to Enoch: mortals had been given a commandment to "love one another," yet those then had become a people "without affection" who "hate their own blood" (Moses 7:33).

We, too, can "refuse to be comforted." We can wrongly charge God with that large portion of human misery which is actually caused by mortals' failure to keep His commandments. Or, like Enoch, we can be intellectually meek enough to look and to accept the truths about God's being there and about His personality and plans.

God may reveal himself directly

Alas, when the Lord gives us "line upon line" and "precept upon precept" about Himself and His plans, many ignore these great gifts. Instead of lines, some demand paragraphs and even pages. When God provides "here a little, and there a little" (Isaiah 28:10), some want a lot—now!

Even so, the pages of scripture rustle with reassurances, such as were tenderly given to Abraham:

"And he said unto me: My son, my son (and his hand was stretched out), behold I will show you all these. And he put his hand upon mine eyes, and I saw those things which his hands had made, which were many; and they multiplied before mine eyes, and I could not see the end thereof" (Abraham 3:12).

Whatever the scale of things, the Lord is there! Whether in speaking of how sun, moon, and stars show "God moving in his majesty and power" (D&C 88:47) or in describing the lilies of the field as being better arrayed than Solomon in all his finery, who is better qualified than the Creator to make such descriptions of the heaven and such comparisons between raiment and flowers? (see Matthew 6:28–29).

A solitary Samaritan woman was one of the very first to learn from His lips that Jesus was in fact the Messiah. She marveled how Jesus "told me all things that ever I did" (John 4:29). Jesus had been there in her life for a long time. To hasten recognition, the resurrected Jesus told Peter where to lower his fishing nets to harvest a particular school of fish (see John 21:6-8). Deity called Samuel, Mary Magdalene, Saul, and Joseph Smith by their first names (see 1 Samuel 3:4, John 20:16, Acts 9:4, Joseph Smith—History 1:17).

Macrolove with such micromanifestations!

God may reveal himself by chastening us

God is not only there in the mildest expressions of His presence, but also in those seemingly harsh expressions. For example, when truth "cutteth . . . to the very center" (1 Nephi 16:2), this may signal that spiritual surgery is underway, painfully severing pride from the soul.

God is there also when true but hard words break open the chained door of a mind taken over by a single obsession. Sometimes, brothers and sisters, instead of the mind's wrapping itself around an idea, an idea wraps itself tightly around the mind—another way in which "pride compasseth . . . about as [with] a chain" (Psalm 73:6).

The Lord is truly there to chastise those whom He loves, including the spiritually preeminent. The brother of Jared for too long had failed to pray (see Ether 2:14). Even the good can become careless without the Lord's being there to chasten. Later, the chastened brother of Jared saw Christ! (see Ether 3:13-16).

God has foreseen all things

What we mortals encounter as the unforeseen, God has already seen, such as how the oil deposits of this earth would shape the latter-day conflicts

among nations. God's "is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations" (Isaiah 4:26). He likewise foresaw all the awful famines, some resulting from the unwise, unnecessary erosions of precious topsoil. He surely foresaw the terrible persecutions of the Jews. Having created the earth, He has anticipated the impact of continental drifts on the frequency and intensity of latter-day earthquakes. He who analogized that "the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest" (Isaiah 57:20) also knows where and when, in latter days, the seas' tidal waves will heave themselves savagely "beyond their bounds" (D&C 88:90).

Without the revelations, however, the answers as to the why of our existence and the why of human suffering would elude even the best intellectual excursions:

"Behold, great and marvelous are the works of the Lord. How unsearchable are the depths of the mysteries of him; and it is impossible that man should find out all his ways. And no man knoweth of his ways save it be revealed unto him; wherefore, brethren, despise not the revelations of God" (Jacob 4:8).

The gospel helps us understand life's purpose

The ultimate human questions are really the "why" questions! The gospel is positively "brim" with answers to the "why" queries concerning human purpose. Gospel truths are the vital integrating and ordering truths, not only telling us of "things as they really are" but also "as they really will be" (Jacob 4:13).

"All things denote there is a God"

No wonder we should "live in thanksgiving daily" (Alma 34:38) because "all things denote there is a God; yea, even the earth, and all things that are upon the face of it, yea, and its motion, yea, and also all the planets which move in their regular form do

witness that there is a Supreme Creator" (Alma 30:44).

Furthermore, "all things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the typifying of [Christ]" (2 Nephi 11:4).

Providing adequate oxygen for us on this planet is a form of God's "lending [us] breath," as in King Benjamin's litany (Mosiah 2:21). God keeps this planet habitable, "preserving [us] from day to day" (v. 21). Given all He has done, no wonder we are, comparatively, "unprofitable servants" (v. 21).

Jesus' continual service to us

Even given our unprofitability, our Redeemer is still there. In fact, Jesus' transcending service to us stretches back to premortal days. When God brought before us His plan of salvation, Jesus was there, volunteering meekly and humbly, "Here am I, send me" (Abraham 3:27), saying, "Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever" (Moses 4:2). The Father, ever anxious that all be free to choose, gave Lucifer opportunity to campaign:

"Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor" (Moses 4:1; see also Abraham 3:27, Isaiah 6:8).

Note the ego dripping from only three lines: two *me*'s and four *I*'s. Those vertical pronouns are usually accompanied by unbending knees, because the proud, as in Jesus' parable, trust "in themselves that they [are] righteous, and [despise] others" (Luke 18:9).

Long ago, it was also meek, loving, and redeeming Jesus who anticipated the need to take the gospel to those in the spirit prison, including the wicked of Noah's time when the "chosen hath pled before [God's] face" (Moses 7:39). Jesus has been there as our long-suffering Shepherd for ages.

Mild expressions of God's presence

We need not be atop high mountains or in sacred groves for God to be there. God is also there even in the mildest expressions of His presence.

Conscience permits the Lord to be there, whether in early warnings or final warnings. He gives us a flash of insight or a twinge of remembrance, pulling us back from a precipice or prompting us to do good. Conscience can warn that we are only falling further behind by insisting on getting even. Conscience warns us not to sink our cleats too deeply in mortal turf, which is so dangerously artificial.

"Yet thou art there!"

In a hundred ways, Deity will always be there, just as Enoch testified, including in our suffering.

Some among us, desperately ill, know the loneliness of a hospital room by night when loved ones have departed or are "sleeping for sorrow" (Luke 22:45), unable to "watch" another "hour" (Matthew 26:40). The night magnifies the stillness of the hospital corridors, as these individuals brush against the veil of death. Even so, whether or not "appointed unto death" (D&C 42:48), these faithful are in His hands. They can and do know of God, "Yet thou art there!"

Widows and widowers whose deprivation stretches into years, when the caress of dimmed memories is insufficient, sometimes sob to see purpose in it all. However, they will later know moments when the Lord shall "wipe away tears from off all faces" (Isaiah 25:8). Meanwhile, they can truly testify, "Yet thou art there!"

Wives and husbands whose lives are shattered by the betrayal of a deserting spouse may feel forsaken or drenched by injustice. Yet they, too, can know, "Thou art there," by responding to Jesus' invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that . . . are heavy laden" (Matthew 11:28).

Parents, striving to reach and to rescue the truculent teenager, experiencing disappointment after disappointment and wondering when it all will end, can be assured, "Yet thou art there!"

To those of you who so suffer and who, nevertheless, so endure and so testify by the eloquence of your examples, we salute you in Christ! Please forgive those of us who clumsily try to comfort you. We know from whence your true comfort comes. God's "bosom" is there to be leaned upon.

Jesus' promised peace is a special form of rest amid unrest. Even when other things are in commotion, His disciples can still stand (see D&C 45:26, 32). His disciples know the Lord is there in latter-days. "I am he who led the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; and my arm is stretched out in the last days, to save my people Israel" (D&C 136:22).

We can confidently cast our cares upon the Lord because, through the agonizing events of Gethsemane and Calvary, atoning Jesus is already familiar with our sins, sicknesses, and sorrows (see 1 Peter 5:7, 2 Nephi 9:21, Alma 7:11-12). He can carry them now because He has successfully carried them before! (see 2 Nephi 9:8).

God loves us perfectly

Yes, God's creations are "stretched out," but so is his redeeming arm (see Exodus 6:6, Psalm 136:6).

He who is ever there is perfect in His love. Moreover, "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9; see also Isaiah 64:4).

The Restoration's assurances

The Restoration is thus filled with such abundant assurances about God,

about life, about the universe, and about us.

As you and I dash about the wonder-filled landscape of the Restoration, exclaiming and observing, it should not surprise us that our first impressions are less than definitive. Little wonder that some of us mistake a cluster of trees for the whole forest or that, in some of our joyful exclamations, there are some unintended exaggerations.

As we rove amid the tall timber of truth, the pervasive scent of pine is inevitably upon us. Our pockets are bulging with souvenir rocks and cones. And we are filled with childish glee. There is no way to survey it all—in one tour or several. Besides, further familiarization will only increase our wonder. After all, One not given to hyperbole used the word *marvelous* to describe the Restoration!

Further reconnoitering, in fact, produces a hushed expectancy because, one day, the faithful will have it all. "The day cometh that . . . all things shall be revealed unto the children of men which ever have been . . . and which ever will be even unto the end of the earth" (2 Nephi 27:11).

Like Moses, Nephi was atop "exceedingly high mountains" and "beheld great things . . . too great for man" (2 Nephi 4:25). Like Enoch, Nephi cited the attributes of God, who is there amid worlds without number, declaring:

"O how great the goodness of our God!" (2 Nephi 9:10).

"O the greatness of the mercy of our God!" (2 Nephi 9:19).

"O how great the plan of our God!" (2 Nephi 9:13).

Gladly and firmly, I add my small voice of witness to these wonderful declarations of adoration, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen!

The choir sang "Faith" without announcement.

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the

Twelve Apostles, followed by the choir singing "Faith."

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now be our concluding speaker for this session.

Elder James E. Faust

You may have heard the story, and it is a story, of the disruptive, noisy boys in a Sunday School class who were asked by their exasperated teacher why they bothered to attend Sunday School. One of the more impudent boys replied, "We came to see you perform a miracle."

The teacher walked slowly over to the boy and menacingly responded, "We don't perform miracles here, but we do cast out devils!"

Satan is the great imitator

For some reason I feel impressed to speak today against the devil and his angels—the source and mainspring of all evil. I do so prayerfully, because Satan is not an enlightening subject. I consider him to be the great imitator.

I think we will witness increasing evidence of Satan's power as the kingdom of God grows stronger. I believe Satan's ever-expanding efforts are some proof of the truthfulness of this work. In the future the opposition will be both more subtle and more open. It will be masked in greater sophistication and cunning, but it will also be more blatant. We will need greater spirituality to perceive all of the forms of evil and greater strength to resist it. But the disappointments and setbacks to the work of God will be temporary, for the work will go forward (see D&C 65:2).

Avoid evil; study its consequences

It is not good practice to become intrigued by Satan and his mysteries. No good can come from getting close to evil. Like playing with fire, it is too

easy to get burned: "The knowledge of sin tempteth to its commission" (in Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], p. 373). The only safe course is to keep well distanced from him and any of his wicked activities or nefarious practices. The mischief of devil worship, sorcery, casting spells, witchcraft, voodooism, black magic, and all other forms of demonism should be avoided like the plague.

However, Brigham Young said that it is important to "study . . . evil, and its consequences" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, comp. John A. Widtsoe [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1941], p. 257). Since Satan is the author of all evil in the world, it would therefore be essential to realize that he is the influence behind the opposition to the work of God. Alma stated the issue succinctly: "For I say unto you that whatsoever is good cometh from God, and whatsoever is evil cometh from the devil" (Alma 5:40).

Know Satan's methods

My principal reason for choosing this subject is to help young people by warning them, as Paul said, "lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Corinthians 2:11). We hope that young people, unfamiliar with the sophistries of the world, can keep themselves free of Satan's enticements and deceitful ways. I personally claim no special insight into Satan's methods, but I have at times been able to identify his influence and his actions in my life and in the lives of others. When I

was on my first mission, Satan sought to divert me from my future path and, if possible, to destroy my usefulness in the Lord's work. That was almost fifty years ago, and I still remember how reasonable his entreaties seemed.

Satan is the master deceiver

Who has not heard and felt the enticings of the devil? His voice often sounds so reasonable and his message so easy to justify. It is an enticing, intriguing voice with dulcet tones. It is neither hard nor discordant. No one would listen to Satan's voice if it sounded harsh or mean. If the devil's voice were unpleasant, it would not entice people to listen to it.

Shakespeare wrote, "The prince of darkness is a gentleman" (*King Lear*, act 3, scene 4, line 143), and "the devil can cite Scripture for his purpose" (*The Merchant of Venice*, act 1, scene 3, line 95). As the great deceiver, Lucifer has marvelous powers of deception. As Paul said to the Corinthians, "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14; see also 2 Nephi 9:9).

Some of Satan's most appealing lines are "Everyone does it"; "If it doesn't hurt anybody else, it's all right"; "If you feel all right about it, it's OK"; or "It's the 'in' thing to do." These subtle entreaties make Satan the great imitator, the master deceiver, the arch counterfeiter, and the great forger.

We all have an inner braking system that will stop us before we follow Satan too far down the wrong road. It is the still, small voice which is within us. But once we have succumbed, the braking system begins to leak brake fluid and our stopping mechanism becomes weak and ineffective.

Satan's pervasiveness

The prince of darkness can be found everywhere. He is often in very good company. Job said, "Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before

the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord" (Job 2:1). His influence is everywhere: "And the Lord said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it" (Job 2:2).

Satan tries to pacify and flatter us

Nephi has given to us the pattern or formula by which Satan operates:

"And others will he pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well—and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell.

"And behold, others he flattereth away, and telleth them there is no hell; and he saith unto them: I am no devil, for there is none—and thus he whispereth in their ears, until he grasps them with his awful chains, from whence there is no deliverance" (2 Nephi 28:21–22).

The First Presidency described Satan: "He is working under such perfect disguise that many do not recognize either him or his methods. There is no crime he would not commit, no debauchery he would not set up, no plague he would not send, no heart he would not break, no life he would not take, no soul he would not destroy. He comes as a thief in the night; he is a wolf in sheep's clothing" (James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965–75], 6:179).

Satan is the world's master in the use of flattery, and he knows the great power of speech (see Jacob 7:4). He has always been one of the great forces of the world.

How Lucifer became the devil

We just recently heard President Ernest LeRoy Hatch of the Guatemala City Temple say, "The devil is not smart because he is the devil; he is

smart because he is old." Indeed, the devil is old, and he was not always the devil. Initially, he was not the perpetrator of evil. He was with the hosts of heaven in the beginning. He was "an angel of God who was in authority in the presence of God" (D&C 76:25). He came before Christ and proposed to God the Father, "Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor" (Moses 4:1). This he proposed to do by force, destroying the free agency of man. Does his statement "Give me thine honor" mean that he wanted to mount an insurrection to supplant even God the Father?

Satan became the devil by seeking glory, power, and dominion by force (see Moses 4:3-4). But Jesus, chosen "from the beginning" (Moses 4:2), said unto God, "Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever" (Moses 4:2). What a contrast in approaches! Wrong as his plan was, Satan was persuasive enough to entice one-third of the hosts of heaven to follow him (see D&C 29:36, Revelation 12:4). He practiced a great deception by saying, "I am also a son of God" (Moses 5:13).

Free agency, given us through the plan of our Father, is the great alternative to Satan's plan of force. With this sublime gift, we can grow, improve, progress, and seek perfection. Without agency, none of us could grow and develop by learning from our mistakes and errors and those of others.

Because of his rebellion, Lucifer was cast out and became Satan, the devil, "the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto my voice" (Moses 4:4). And so this personage who was an angel of God and in authority, even in the presence of God, was removed from the presence of God and his Son (see D&C 76:25). This caused great sadness in the heavens, "for the

heavens wept over him—he was Lucifer, a son of the morning" (D&C 76:26). Does this not place some responsibility on the followers of Christ to show concern for loved ones who have lost their way and "are shut out from the presence of God"? (Moses 6:49). I know of no better help than to show unconditional love and help lost souls seek another path.

An important negative function

Satan does, however, perform an important negative function. In the book of 2 Nephi we are told, "For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things" (2:11). However, Peter warns, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

Satan misdirects our good motives

Let us not become so intense in our zeal to do good by winning arguments or by our pure intention in disputing doctrine that we go beyond good sense and manners, thereby promoting contention, or say and do imprudent things, invoke cynicism, or ridicule with flippancy. In this manner, our good motives become so misdirected that we lose friends and, even more serious, we come under the influence of the devil. I recently heard in a special place, "Your criticism may be worse than the conduct you are trying to correct."

C. S. Lewis gave us a keen insight into devilish tactics. In a fictional letter, the master devil, Screwtape, instructs the apprentice devil Wormwood, who is in training to become a more experienced devil:

"You will say that these are very small sins; and doubtless, like all young tempters, you are anxious to be able to report spectacular wickedness. . . . It does not matter how small the sins are,

provided that their cumulative effect is to edge the man away from the Light and out into the Nothing. . . . Indeed the safest road to Hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without mile-stones, without signposts” (*The Screw-tape Letters* [New York: Macmillan, 1961], pp. 64–65).

The strength of Satan’s power

C. S. Lewis also wrote: “A silly idea is current that good people do not know what temptation means. This is an obvious lie. Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is. . . . You find out the strength of a wind by trying to walk against it, not by lying down” (*Mere Christianity* [New York: Macmillan, 1960], p. 124).

The Prophet Joseph Smith related from his own experience, “The nearer a person approaches the Lord, a greater power will be manifested by the adversary to prevent the accomplishment of His purposes” (in Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1945], p. 132).

We can withstand Satan’s power

However, we need not become paralyzed with fear of Satan’s power. He can have no power over us unless we permit it. He is really a coward, and if we stand firm, he will retreat. The Apostle James counseled: “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). He cannot know our thoughts unless we speak them. And Nephi states that “he hath no power over the hearts” of people who are righteous (see 1 Nephi 22:26).

We have heard comedians and others justify or explain their misdeeds by saying, “The devil made me do it.” I do not really think the devil can make us do anything. Certainly he can tempt and he can deceive, but he has no authority over us which we do not give him.

The power to resist Satan may be stronger than we realize. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught: “All beings who have bodies have power over those who have not. The devil has no power over us only as we permit him. The moment we revolt at anything which comes from God, the devil takes power” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 181).

We can be forgiven

He also stated, “Wicked spirits have their bounds, limits, and laws by which they are governed” (*History of the Church*, 4:576). So Satan and his angels are not all-powerful. One of Satan’s approaches is to persuade a person who has transgressed that there is no hope of forgiveness. But there is always hope. Most sins, no matter how grievous, may be repented of if the desire is sincere enough.

A shield against Satan

Satan has had great success with this gullible generation. As a consequence, literally hosts of people have been victimized by him and his angels. There is, however, an ample shield against the power of Lucifer and his hosts. This protection lies in the spirit of discernment through the gift of the Holy Ghost. This gift comes undeviatingly by personal revelation to those who strive to obey the commandments of the Lord and to follow the counsel of the living prophets.

This personal revelation will surely come to all whose eyes are single to the glory of God, for it is promised that their bodies will be “filled with light, and there shall be no darkness” in them (D&C 88:67). Satan’s efforts can be thwarted by all who come unto Christ by obedience to the covenants and ordinances of the gospel. The humble followers of the divine Master need not be deceived by the devil if they

will be honest and true to their fellow men and women, go to the house of the Lord, receive the sacrament worthily, observe the Sabbath day, pay their tithes and offerings, offer contrite prayers, engage in the Lord's work, and follow those who preside over them.

I wish to testify that there are forces which will save us from the ever-increasing lying, disorder, violence, chaos, destruction, misery, and deceit that are upon the earth. Those saving forces are the everlasting principles, covenants, and ordinances of the eternal gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. These same principles, covenants, and ordinances are coupled with the rights and powers of the priesthood of Almighty God. We of this church are the possessors and custodians of these commanding powers which can and do roll back much of the power of Satan on the earth. We believe that we hold these mighty forces in trust for all who have died, for all who are now living, and for the yet unborn.

I pray that, through the spreading of righteousness, the evil hands of the destroyer might be stayed and that he may not be permitted to curse the whole world. I also pray that God will overlook our weaknesses, our frailties, and our many shortcomings and generously forgive us of our misdeeds. I further

pray that He will bring solace to the suffering, comfort to those who grieve, and peace to the brokenhearted, in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder James E. Faust, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just spoken to us.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M.

The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. Those desiring to attend this broadcast must be in their seats no later than 9:15 A.M.

We express gratitude today to the Primary children's choir from the Sandy Utah Region for the inspirational music we have heard this afternoon. I might add that their very appearance is an inspiration as well.

The choir will now sing in closing, "Beautiful Savior." Following the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder Francis M. Gibbons of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Beautiful Savior."
Elder Francis M. Gibbons offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 157th Semi-annual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, October 3, 1987. President Ezra Taft Benson presided, and President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted.

The music for this session was provided by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and the Mormon Youth Chorus. The choir was under the direction of Jerold Ottley

and Robert C. Bowden, with Robert Cundick at the organ.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks:

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, President Ezra Taft Benson, who presides at this conference, has asked that I conduct this general priesthood session.

These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission

to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the BYU Marriott Center, and in locations in many countries around the world.

Elders Hartman Rector, Jr., and Keith W. Wilcox are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall, and Elders F. Burton Howard and John Sonnenberg are seated on the stand in the BYU Marriott Center.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus under the direction of Brothers Jerold Ottley and Robert C. Bowden with Brother Robert Cundick at the organ.

We shall begin by the choir singing "The Spirit of God." The congregation is invited to sing with the choir the first verse as directed by Brother Ottley. Following the singing, Elder

Ted E. Brewerton, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "The Spirit of God."

Elder Ted E. Brewerton offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will now favor us with the hymn, "For the Strength of the Hills We Bless Thee." Following this, Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will speak to us.

The choir sang "For the Strength of the Hills."

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Keys of the priesthood

You all know how valuable keys can be. Many, if not most, of us carry keys in our pockets at this very moment.

But the keys about which I shall speak are far more important. They are precious, powerful, and invisible! Some can lock and unlock in heaven as well as on earth. I speak of keys of the priesthood.

You boys hold what is sometimes referred to as the preparatory priesthood. Preparation, priesthood service, and keys are all related, but different. Service of any type requires preparation. But proper authorization to give that service requires keys. May I illustrate?

Prior to my call to the Twelve, I served as a medical doctor and surgeon. I had earned two doctor's degrees. I had been certified by two specialty boards. That long preparation had consumed many years, yet it carried no legal

permission. Keys were required. They were held by authorities of the state government and the hospitals in which I desired to work. Once those holding proper authority exercised those keys by granting me a license and permission, then I could perform operations. In return, I was obligated to obey the law, to be loyal, and to understand and not abuse the power of a surgeon's knife. The important steps of preparation, permission, and obligation likewise pertain to other occupations.

Why is the power to act in the name of God more important? Because it is of eternal significance. We should understand the source of our authority and something of the keys that control its power. They may benefit every man, woman, and child who now lives, who has lived, and who yet will live upon the earth.

Let us consider keys of the priesthood through three scenes of history: in ancient days, during the Lord's mortal ministry, and in modern times.

Scene one: ancient days

Scene one pertains to keys of the priesthood in ancient days, even before creation of the earth. We then existed as spirit children of God. Abraham was one of us. He was told that he was among rulers chosen—even before he was born (see Abraham 3:23). Scriptures also relate that the Lord God fore-ordained priests prepared from the foundation of the world according to his foreknowledge. Thus, our calling to the holy priesthood was foreseen before we were born (see Alma 13:1–5).

We know that Adam received priesthood authority before the world was formed (see *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], pp. 157, 167–68; see also D&C 78:16).

The potential of the priesthood is so vast that our comprehension of it is a challenge. The Prophet Joseph Smith declared, “The Priesthood is an everlasting principle, and existed with God from eternity, and will to eternity” (*Teachings*, p. 157).

President Brigham Young added that the priesthood is “the law by which the worlds are, were, and will continue for ever and ever” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1941], p. 130).

Priesthood is the authority of God delegated to man to minister for the salvation of men. “The power of directing these labors constitutes the keys of the Priesthood” (Joseph F. Smith, “Editor’s Table,” *Improvement Era*, Jan. 1901, p. 230).

Many in scene one held those keys, such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Elias, and Elijah.

Scene two: the Lord’s mortal ministry

Scene two pertains to keys of the priesthood during the mortal ministry of the Lord. Jesus revealed the extent of priesthood authority. To his Apostles,

the Savior said, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19; see also D&C 128:10).

Within a week of that promise, Jesus took Peter, James, and John to a high mountain. Keys of the priesthood were bestowed upon them by Moses and Elijah (Elias) under divine direction (see Matthew 17:1–5).

The Master then reminded his disciples of their sacred calls to the holy apostleship, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you” (John 15:16; see also D&C 7:7).

Jesus not only called and ordained men, but he taught them their duties.

After Christ was crucified, and even before the early Apostles completed their labors, the Apostasy began. This occurred as prophesied when priesthood authority was abused and sacred ordinances were defiled.

Scene three: modern times

With scenes one and two as background, let us consider scene three—the modern times in which we live. After centuries of apostasy, keys of the priesthood have again been restored. Under that authority, we have had hands laid upon our heads.

Obligations pertain to those who *give* and to those who *receive* ordinations or calls.

Perhaps that can be explained by example. I hold a set of keys to an automobile. In your mind, let them represent keys to something of value in your life—a tractor, an implement, or a powerful instrument. If I give keys to you, I have certain obligations, and you have certain obligations.

For me as the giver, I have a duty toward your success. Should you fail, in a measure I have failed. So I must teach and train adequately to ensure your personal safety and, at the same time, safeguard precious property you are to use.

For you as the receiver, obligations accompany the keys. You must know applicable laws and obey them. Loyalty is expected. And you should understand the power of your instrument. Obedience, loyalty, and understanding are implicit with your acceptance of those keys.

Now apply the same principles to keys of the priesthood. Your stake president, quorum president, and bishop hold keys of presidency. Their keys control the power of their unit of the Church. Those leaders not only may call and release, but they must train and bear sacred responsibility that the mission of the Church be accomplished.

They who *receive* ordinations or callings have obligations of obedience, loyalty, and understanding.

Obedience to law first and foremost means keeping the commandments of God. By so doing, one becomes worthy to receive personal revelation! Those who receive the Melchizedek Priesthood are under solemn oath and covenant to "live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God" (D&C 84:44).

Loyalty is vital. Loyalty to him who has keys to call and to release you, even though he is an imperfect human being, will develop unity essential to success (see D&C 124:45-46). The Lord defined this reality when he said, "Israel shall be saved in mine own due time; and by the keys which I have given shall they be led" (D&C 35:25).

To *understand* the power of the priesthood, we must know its limitations. If an automobile is used recklessly, future permission from parents is likely to be denied. So, if priesthood power be abused, "the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man" (D&C 121:37).

To *understand* the power of the priesthood, we must know the divinity of its restoration in these latter days. In 1820, our Heavenly Father and his Son Jesus Christ appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith. In 1829, John the Baptist conferred the Aaronic Priesthood upon

Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery (see D&C 13, 27:8; Joseph Smith—History 1:69, 72). Shortly thereafter they received the Melchizedek Priesthood under the hands of Peter, James, and John (see D&C 27:11-12).

Later, the Lord spoke to Joseph and Oliver of others to whom specific keys of the priesthood had been committed. Each, in turn, did confer these keys:

Moroni: Keys of the Book of Mormon (see D&C 27:5).

Moses: Keys of the gathering of Israel and the leading of the ten tribes (see D&C 110:11).

Elias: Keys of the restoration of all things (see D&C 27:6), including the Abrahamic covenant (see D&C 110:12; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-56], 3:126-27).

Elijah: Keys of the sealing power (see D&C 27:9, 110:13-16; see also 128:21).

Joseph Smith conferred all keys on all of the Twelve (see *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:154-56). In turn, keys have been transferred to present leaders.

Today, President Ezra Taft Benson actively holds every restored key held by "all those who have received a dispensation at any time *from the beginning of the creation*" (D&C 112:31; italics added; see also D&C 128:18).

Surely a sacred moment of my life occurred April 12, 1984, when the First Presidency and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles laid their hands upon my head. As had been done for others before me, all the keys of the priesthood were conferred. As it is with each member of the Quorum of the Twelve, some keys are not used until called upon by the Lord, or as directed by his senior Apostle.

I feel the weight of responsibility and the burden of timeless trust. I know those keys have been restored "for the last days and for the last time" (D&C 112:30).

I am deeply grateful that we bear the priesthood—each of us foreordained from the foundation of the world for that responsibility (see Alma 13:1–5).

As a symbol of gratitude, I have penned a few lines to be sung as the concluding portion of my message. A verse for each of three scenes of history may summarize my remarks. This song will be new to you. The words have been written to music from Wales.¹ For the gracious support of Brother Jerold D. Ottley and our male chorus I express my appreciation. To this song I have assigned an ancient title, “Hosanna,” the prayerful shout of fervent praise.

*Through time's immortal endless
stay
In love he guides our way.
Beyond the realms of heaven's
beam,
Our great God, Elohim.
Hosanna to his holy name—
Our fathers' God is still the same.*

*That holy night in Bethlehem
His Son was born among men.
To ransom from a timeless grave,
Each child of God to save.
Hosanna to his holy name—
Our fathers' God is still the same.*

*His priesthood power restored to
earth*

*To bless each soul given birth.
Our song of prayer to him we
raise
Proclaiming joy and praise.
Hosanna to his holy name—
Our fathers' God is still the same.
Amen, amen, amen, amen.*

May we be true to the trust he has given to us who bear the holy priesthood and hold its sacred keys, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

¹Lyrics by Russell M. Nelson, copyright 1987; “Tydi A Roddaist,” by Arwell Hughes, copyright 1938. Gratitude is expressed to Mr. Hughes for permission to use his music with these words, and to Barry D. R. Whittaker, president of the Cardiff Wales Stake, for his assistance.

President Hinckley

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has spoken to us, and the combined choruses have sung his words in an old Welsh hymn setting.

We shall now be pleased to listen to Bishop Glenn L. Pace, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric.

Bishop Glenn L. Pace

What makes us happy?

It is my desire to have a heart-to-heart chat with you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood—especially those among you who came to this meeting reluctantly, or perhaps would not have come at all, were it not for a mild threat or a small bribe from your father or priesthood leaders.

When our children were younger and we would be on our way to Sunday Church meetings, occasionally we would pass a car pulling a boat. My children would become silent and press their noses against the windows and

ask, “Dad, why can’t we go waterskiing today instead of to church?”

Sometimes I would take the easy but cowardly way out and answer, “It’s simple; we don’t have a boat.” However, on my more conscientious days, I would muster up all the logic and spirituality available to a patriarch of a family and try to explain how much happier our family was because of our Church activity.

I first realized I wasn’t getting through when on a subsequent Sunday we saw a family laughing and excited as they loaded their snow skis onto their

car. One of my teenage sons said with a sly grin, "They're not really happy, huh, Dad?" That statement has become a family joke whenever we see someone doing something we cannot do. When I see a teenager driving a beautiful, expensive sports car, I say to my sons, "Now there's one miserable guy."

You young men are growing up in a most challenging and confusing world. Activities always forbidden by the Lord and for many years frowned upon by society are now accepted and promoted by that same society. The media serves up these activities in such a fashion as to make them look very desirable. Add to acceptability and desirability the power of peer pressure, and you have an extremely explosive situation.

Avoid the world's temptations

Lehi's vision of the tree of life is appropriate for our day. In that vision, he saw a great and spacious building, which represents the pride and temptations of the world:

"And I . . . beheld . . . a great and spacious building; . . .

"And it was filled with people, both old and young, . . . and their manner of dress was exceedingly fine; and they were in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers towards those who . . . were partaking of the fruit" (1 Nephi 8:26-27).

Even though you have a testimony and want to do what is right, it is difficult not to be drawn to the great and spacious building. From all appearances, the people in the building seem to be having a great time. The music and laughter are deafening. You would say to me what my children have said, "They're not really happy, huh, Dad?" as you watch them party.

They look happy and free, but don't mistake celestial pleasure for celestial happiness and joy. Don't mistake lack of self-control for freedom. Complete freedom without appropriate

restraint makes us slaves to our appetites. Don't envy a lesser and lower life.

When I was in junior high school, I would get out of bed on cold winter mornings and head for the heat vent to get warm. The family cat would always beat me there, so I would gently shoo her away and sit down. Soon my mother would tell me it was time to leave for school. I would look out at the icicles on the house and dread going out into the cold, let alone begin another day of school.

As I kissed my mother good-bye and went out the door, I would look longingly at my comfortable spot in front of the heat vent and find that the cat had repossessed it. How I envied that cat! If that weren't enough, she would look up at me with heavy eyelids and an expression as if to laugh at me and say, "Have fun in school, Glenn. I'm sure glad I'm not a human!" I hated it when she did that!

However, an interesting thing would happen as the day went on. I would come home after experiencing the joys and sorrows of the school day and see that lazy cat still curled up in front of the vent, and I would smile and say to her, "I'm sure glad I'm not a cat."

Obey commandments to be happy

To those of you who are inching your way closer and closer to that great and spacious building, let me make it completely clear that the people in that building have absolutely nothing to offer except instant, short-term gratification inescapably connected to long-term sorrow and suffering. The commandments you observe were not given by a dispassionate God to prevent you from having fun, but by a loving Father in Heaven who wants you to be happy while you are living on this earth as well as in the hereafter.

Compare the blessings of living the Word of Wisdom to those available to you if you choose to party with those

in the great and spacious building. Compare the joy of intelligent humor and wit to drunken, silly, crude, loud laughter. Compare our faithful young women who still have a blush in their cheeks with those who, having long lost their blush, try to persuade you to join them in their loss. Compare lifting people up to putting people down. Compare the ability to receive personal revelation and direction in your life to being tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine. Compare holding the priesthood of God with anything you see going on in that great and spacious building.

We cannot change absolute truths

The members of many churches in the world have been putting pressure on their leaders to change doctrine to fit the changing life-style of the members. Many have been successful, and more and more we see churches made up of the doctrines of men. There are absolute truths of eternity. They do not change as a society drifts from them. No popular vote can change an absolute, eternal truth. Legalizing an act does not make it moral. Don't be fooled by the argument "Everybody's doing it." Your spirit should be offended and your intelligence insulted by such reasoning.

When all of the evidence is in, the world's graduate school of hard knocks will teach what you young men were taught in the kindergarten of your spiritual training, "Wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10). Why wait for finite man to prove what his infinite Creator has already revealed to his prophets?

Fighting for truth is exciting

I know how much you like thrills, adventure, and excitement. Do you want excitement? I'll give you excitement. Do you realize you are outnumbered in the world 1,000 to 1? The sons of Helaman didn't face those odds. As the winds of popular opinion

intensify and the mocking increases from those who are trying to justify their own unrighteous actions, you will be required to put on the full armor of God. You will need to fight with all of your strength to keep unspotted from the world. We plead with you to stay true—not for us, but for you.

With odds of 1,000 to 1, shall the youth of Zion falter? I give a firm testimony. No! Never! The youth of the kingdom will emerge victorious. Now that's exciting! What adventure in that great and spacious building would you trade for the thrill and excitement of building the very kingdom the Savior will come to the earth to govern?

Repentance offers hope

We love you, the youth of the Church, and we know you will collectively succeed. However, we have great anxiety for individuals we may lose along the way. Speaking as a father, I can tell you the loss of one of you is too many. We want each and every one of you to succeed, not just the majority.

To those of you who are struggling and losing ground, you who have been lured into that building through one of its many doors and now find no doors going out, you who feel trapped and defeated, we assure you there is hope, and all is not lost. Through his atonement, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has provided a way for you to escape that awful place. He knows you intimately. He knows your name, and he knows your pain. If you will approach your Father in Heaven with a broken heart and contrite spirit, you will find yourself miraculously lifted out of that great and spacious building and into the loving and comforting arms of the Savior of mankind.

At your earthly home, you will find your father's arms have always been open for you and that during your absence your mother never stopped setting your place at the table in front of your empty chair. You will see clearly the difference between telestial happiness and celestial happiness, and you

will experience and savor celestial joy through this life and throughout all eternity. I so testify and promise, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

He who has just spoken to us is Bishop Glenn L. Pace, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric.

President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will now address us.

President Thomas S. Monson

The joy of missionary work

What an inspiring sight to see this historic tabernacle filled to capacity, then to realize that chapels and halls throughout the world are similarly filled by those who hold the priesthood of God. I pray for the inspiration of heaven to attend me and to direct the remarks I make.

My mind goes back in memory to a general priesthood meeting held in 1956. At that time I was serving in the stake presidency of the Temple View Stake here in Salt Lake City. Percy K. Fetzer, John R. Burt, and I, the stake presidency, had come to the Tabernacle early, that hopefully we might find a place to sit. We were among the first to enter the Tabernacle and had almost two hours to wait before the meeting would begin.

President Fetzer related to President Burt and me an experience from his missionary days in Germany. He described how one rainy night he and his companion were to present a gospel message to a group assembled in a school house. A protester had broadcast falsehoods concerning the Church, and a number of people threatened violence against the two missionaries. At a critical moment, a woman who was a widow stepped between the elders and the angry group and said, "These young men are my guests and are coming to my home now. Please make way for us to leave."

The crowd parted, and the missionaries walked through the rainy night with their benefactress, arriving

at length at her modest home. She placed their wet coats over the kitchen chairs and invited the missionaries to sit at the table while she prepared food for them. After eating, the elders presented a message to the kind lady who had befriended them. A young son of the woman was invited to come to the table, but he refused, preferring his position of solitude and warmth directly behind the kitchen stove.

President Fetzer concluded the account with the comment, "While I don't know if that woman ever joined the Church, I'll forever be grateful to her for her kindness that rain-drenched night thirty-three years ago."

The brethren sitting in front of us here in the Tabernacle had been speaking to one another also. After a while, we began listening to their conversation. One asked the friend sitting next to him, "Tell me how you came to be a member of the Church."

The brother responded, "One rainy night in Germany, my mother brought to our house two drenched missionaries whom she had rescued from a mob. Mother fed the elders, and they presented to her a message concerning the work of the Lord. They invited me to join the discussion, but I was shy and fearful, so I remained secure in my seat behind the stove. Later, when I once more heard about the Church, I remembered the courage and faith, as well as the message, of those two humble missionaries, and this led to my conversion. I suppose I'll never meet those two missionaries here in mortality, but I'll be forever grateful to them. I know

not where they were from. I think one was named Fetzer."

At this point, President Burt and I looked at President Fetzer and noticed the great tears which coursed down his cheeks. Without saying a word to us, President Fetzer tapped on the shoulder of the man in front of us who had just related his conversion experience. To him he then said, "I'm Bruder Fetzer. I was one of the two missionaries whom you befriended that night. I'm grateful to meet the boy who sat behind the stove—the lad who listened and who learned."

I do not remember the messages delivered during the priesthood meeting that night, but I shall never forget the faith-filled conversation which preceded the commencement of the meeting.

A missionary-minded people

The words of the Lord seemed so appropriate then. They are equally appropriate now: "And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!" (D&C 18:15).

We are a missionary-minded people. We have a divine mandate to proclaim the message of the Restoration. You young men here this night are on the threshold of your missionary opportunity. That energetic missionary from the Book of Mormon, even Alma, provides for us a blueprint for missionary conduct: "This is my glory, that perhaps I may be an instrument in the hands of God to bring some soul to repentance; and this is my joy" (Alma 29:9).

I add my personal witness: Our missionaries are not salesmen with wares to peddle; rather, they are servants of the Most High God, with testimonies to bear, truths to teach, and souls to save.

The Lord's promise to missionaries

Each missionary who goes forth in response to a sacred call becomes a servant of the Lord whose work this truly is. Do not fear, young men, for He will be with you. He never fails. He has promised: "I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up" (D&C 84:88).

"And ye shall go forth in the power of my Spirit, preaching my gospel, two by two, in my name, lifting up your voices as with the sound of a trumpet, declaring my word like unto angels of God" (D&C 42:6).

Preparing missionaries

Fathers, bishops, quorum advisers, yours is the responsibility to prepare this generation of missionaries, to quicken in the hearts of these deacons, teachers, and priests not only an awareness of their obligation to serve, but also a vision of the opportunities and blessings which await them through a missionary call. The work is demanding, the impact everlasting. This is no time for "summer soldiers" in the army of the Lord.

The missionary recommendations that arrive daily at Church headquarters present a spectrum of preparedness. Let me share with you just one or two comments gleaned from the period I served on the Missionary Committee. One recommendation form contained this comment written by the bishop: "John is very close to his mother. She would be happy if he were assigned to a mission close to their home so she could phone weekly and visit him on occasion." As I read this comment to President Spencer W. Kimball, who assigned the missionaries then, I wondered what his reaction would be. Would he assign the young man to California or Washington, that he might be near his Oregon home? Without raising his eyes from the assignment sheet, President Kimball said, "Please assign this young man to Johannesburg, South Africa."

Another missionary recommendation contained the comment from the stake president: "This young man was instrumental in bringing his stepfather into the Church about a year ago. His stepfather told me it was because of Jerry getting up each Sunday morning and going to church that caused him to wonder what kind of church could have that much influence on a boy."

Value of missionary letters

In many respects, a mission is a family calling. The letters which a missionary sends to Mother and Father are packed with power—spiritual power. They are filled with faith—abiding faith. I've always maintained that such letters seem to pass through a heavenly post office before being delivered to home and family. Mother treasures every word. Father fills with pride. The letters are read over and over again—and are never discarded.

I trust parents will remember that their letters to a missionary son or daughter bring home and heaven close to him or to her and provide a renewal of commitment to the sacred calling of missionary. God will inspire you as you take pen in hand to express to one you love the feelings of your soul and the love of your heart.

At the funeral service for the mother of Elder Marion G. Romney, held in Provo, Utah, her son-in-law, Brother John K. Edmunds, gave the following account: "In their early married life, Brother and Sister Romney lived in Mexico. Brother Romney [like the father of President Benson] was called on a mission. There was no feasible means of support, yet he went and his wife sustained him. One day she grieved because she wanted to write her husband a letter but did not have sufficient money to buy a postage stamp. She prayed and then took a walk through the orchard that autumn day, kicking the leaves as she walked along and thinking of her husband. She noticed a shiny object on the ground and

discovered it to be a coin—just the right amount for several postage stamps."

Her letter had been written. Now, through the intervention of God, it could be mailed.

Missionaries' families are blessed

Brethren, think of the family blessings received by the Romney and Benson families, which blessings followed the commitment to missionary service.

I think of my own grandfather, Nels Monson, who waited seven years for his sweetheart to become his bride. The first entry in his missionary journal expressed eloquently his gratitude: "Today, in the Salt Lake Temple, Maria Mace became my eternal wife." The entry written three days later was more somber: "Tonight the bishop came to our house. I have been called to serve a two-year mission to Scandinavia. My dear wife will remain at home and sustain me." I treasure such faith. I cherish such commitment.

I commend the many couples who now go forth to serve. Leaving the comforts of home, the companionship of family, they walk hand in hand as eternal companions, but also hand in hand with God as His representatives to a faith-starved world.

To the many who contribute of their means for missionary service, I express the thanks of the Church and the sentiments of my soul. The gratitude of God may come soon. Then again, it may come as it did to Brother Fetzer—after thirty-three years. This I know: It will come. It will bless. It will comfort. It will sanctify.

Sudbury family blessed by missionary service

Last month the Salt Lake City newspapers carried an obituary notice for Fred Sudbury. It indicated that he was survived by his wife, Pearl, and a son, Craig; that he was a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-

day Saints; and that his marriage had been solemnized in the Salt Lake Temple. What the obituary notice could not adequately convey was the inspiring human drama which preceded Fred's passing.

Some years ago, Craig Sudbury and his mother came to my office prior to Craig's departure for the Australia Melbourne Mission. Fred Sudbury, Craig's father, was noticeably absent. Twenty-five years earlier, Craig's mother had married Fred, who did not share her love for the Church and, indeed, was not a member.

Craig confided to me his deep and abiding love for his parents and his hope that somehow, in some way, his father would be touched by the Spirit and open his heart to the gospel of Jesus Christ. I prayed for inspiration concerning how such a desire might be fulfilled. Such inspiration came, and I said to Craig, "Serve the Lord with all your heart. Be obedient to your sacred calling. Each week write a letter to your parents; and on occasion, write to Dad personally and let him know that you love him, and tell him why you're grateful to be his son." He thanked me and, with his mother, departed the office.

I was not to see Craig's mother for over eighteen months. She came to the office and, in sentences punctuated by tears, said to me, "It has been almost two years since Craig departed for his mission. He has never failed in writing a letter to us each week. Recently, my husband, Fred, stood for the first time in a testimony meeting and said, 'All of you know that I am not a member of the Church, but something has happened to me since Craig left for his mission. His letters have touched my soul. May I share one with you?'"

" 'Dear Dad,

" ' "Today we taught a choice family about the plan of salvation and blessings of exaltation in the celestial kingdom. For me it just wouldn't be a celestial kingdom if you were not there. I'm grateful to be your son, Dad, and want you to know that I love you.

" ' "Your missionary son,

" ' "Craig"

" 'After twenty-six years of marriage, I have made my decision to become a member of the Church, for I know the gospel message is the word of God. My son's mission has moved me to action. I have made arrangements for my wife and me to meet Craig when he completes his mission. I will be his final baptism as a full-time missionary of the Lord.' " He heard the message, he saw the light, he embraced the truth.

A young missionary with unwavering faith had participated with God in a modern-day miracle. His challenge to communicate with one whom he loved had been made more difficult by the barrier of the thousands of miles that lay between him and home. But the spirit of love spanned the vast expanse of the blue Pacific, and heart spoke to heart in divine dialogue.

No missionary stood so tall as did Craig Sudbury when, in far-off Australia, he helped his father into water waist-deep and, raising his right arm to the square, repeated those sacred words: "Fred Sudbury, having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (see D&C 20:73).

The prayer of a mother, the faith of a father, the service of a son brought forth the miracle of God.

"How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Romans 10:15).

God bless us, my brethren, with missionary memories of stalwart service in the cause of Christ, I pray in His holy name, amen.

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Redeemer of Israel."

The choir and congregation sang
"Redeemer of Israel."

President Hinckley spoke without
announcement.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, President Benson has asked that I now speak to you.

It is always an inspiration to look into the faces of this vast body of priesthood assembled in the Tabernacle and to think of many times this number gathered in Church buildings across this continent and in other areas of the world. Your presence at these Saturday night meetings is an indication of your faith and of your great dedication to the work of the Lord. I commend you and thank you and express my love for you.

Your sustaining prayers mean a very great deal. I know, as I am sure my brethren know, that your prayers ascend to the Lord in behalf of the General Authorities of the Church. It is a great and sacred trust which has been placed upon us, and we have a sense of duty to the Lord and to you, our fellow workers in this His great cause.

The problem of profane language

I should like to address my remarks to the boys who are here, the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood. I have in hand a letter sent me by a public official. He wrote:

"Would you please consider dealing with the problem of the use of profanity, swearing, and vulgar language?"

"From my high school days years ago I can only recall one student who indulged in such, and most students shunned his association. Today, if I am correctly informed, its use has

reached epidemic proportions among our high school youth."

He goes on: "One evening I was watching a TV movie with my sixteen-year-old son. When some crude language was used, I suggested that we turn off the TV. My son said, 'All right, Dad, but that's nothing compared to what I hear at school all the time.' In visiting with some of the youth in our community I receive the same report. One boy commented, 'Everybody, nearly, talks that way. The girls are just as bad or worse than the boys.'

"What I fear from these reports is that the prevalent use of foul language has become an acceptable pattern in the schools, probably due in large part to the influence of TV and the general permissiveness in our society. Whatever the cause, I hope that some additional emphasis might be made to curb it, to help our youth appreciate the importance of proper language."

Profanity becoming more prevalent

I believe the suggestion is timely. I clipped from the *Wall Street Journal* a recent column by Hodding Carter. In it he states:

"If it was once rare to hear sailors' language in mixed company, it is now difficult to avoid it. For whatever reason, the enduring contribution to America left by the 1960s has been the debasement of public discourse and behavior" ("Our Public Manners, Sir, Are Execrable," *Wall Street Journal*, 4 June 1987, p.31).

Mr. Carter writes as a former Marine and as a newspaper reporter, both groups known for their use of salty language. This he admits, and confesses his guilt. But he decries the growing public practice. He continues:

"Such behavior is not confined to the big cities or the two coasts. . . . While what was once labeled ghetto language is, of course, prevalent in the ghetto, it is also commonplace at Harvard and Tulane, at Davenport, Iowa, and Destin, Florida, to name a few . . . places."

He goes on: "Beyond language is the larger problem, which is the decline of civility in general. . . .

"And so we are assaulted on all sides by the ethos of the slob, with few having the courage or desire to confront it head on." Says he: "I rarely challenge the foulmouth who embarrasses my mother in a public place. . . . I, like most of you, simply wince and turn away" (Hodding Carter, "Public Manners," p. 31).

Conversations I have had with school principals and students lead me to the same conclusion—that even among *our* young people, there is an evil and growing habit of profanity and the use of foul and filthy language.

A serious violation

I do not hesitate to say that it is wrong, seriously wrong, for any young man ordained to the priesthood of God to be guilty of such.

The taking of the Lord's name in vain is a most serious matter.

When Moses was leading the children of Israel out of Egypt to the land of promise, he went up into the mountain to commune with the Lord, and the finger of the Lord wrote the Decalogue on tablets of stone. These ten commandments became the basis of the Judeo-Christian code governing human behavior. Every one of the ten is important, and among them is this statement: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will

not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain" (Exodus 20:7).

So serious was violation of this law considered in ancient Israel that blasphemy of the name of the Lord was regarded as a capital crime. There is an interesting account in the book of Leviticus:

The son of an Israelitish woman "blasphemed the name of the Lord, and cursed. And they brought him unto Moses. . . .

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

"Bring forth him that hath cursed . . . and let all that heard him lay their hands upon his head, and let all the congregation stone him.

"And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin.

"And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him" (Leviticus 24:11, 13-16).

While that most serious of penalties has long since ceased to be inflicted, the gravity of the sin has not changed.

The Lord has spoken again in our time concerning this serious matter. In the revelation given to President Brigham Young on January 14, 1847, while the Saints were preparing to leave Winter Quarters for these valleys in the West, the Lord said to them, "Keep yourselves from evil to take the name of the Lord in vain, for I am the Lord your God, even the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob" (D&C 136:21).

In a general epistle to the entire Church issued by the First Presidency on April 8, 1887, a hundred years ago, they said concerning this problem, which evidently was serious then as it is now, "The habit, . . . which some young people fall into, of using vulgarity and profanity, . . . is not only offensive to all well-bred persons, but it is a gross sin in the sight of God, and should not exist among the children of

the Latter-day Saints" (James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-75], 3:112-13).

Profanity destroyed respect

I once worked with a group of railroad men who seemed to pride themselves on the use of profanity. They tried to make an art of it. I recall handing a written instruction to a switchman. It was his job to take care of the matter as instructed, but he thought it inconvenient that he should have to do so at that time. On reading the order, he flew into a tantrum. He was a fifty-year-old man, but he acted like a spoiled child. He threw his cap on the ground and jumped on it and let forth such a string of expletives as to seem to cause the air to turn blue around him. Every third or fourth word was the name of Deity spoken in vain.

I thought, how childish can a grown man be? The very idea of a man acting and speaking like that was totally repugnant. I could never again give him my full respect.

An important lesson

When I was a small boy in the first grade, I experienced what I thought was a rather tough day at school. I came home, walked in the house, threw my book on the kitchen table, and let forth an expletive that included the name of the Lord.

My mother was shocked. She told me quietly, but firmly, how wrong I was. She told me that I could not have words of that kind coming out of my mouth. She led me by the hand into the bathroom, where she took from the shelf a clean washcloth, put it under the faucet, and then generously coated it with soap. She said, "We'll have to wash out your mouth." She told me to open it, and I did so reluctantly. Then she rubbed the soapy washcloth around my tongue and teeth. I sputtered and

fumed and felt like swearing again, but I didn't. I rinsed and rinsed my mouth, but it was a long while before the soapy taste was gone. In fact, whenever I think of that experience, I can still taste the soap. The lesson was worthwhile. I think I can say that I have tried to avoid using the name of the Lord in vain since that day. I am grateful for that lesson.

Consequences of profane language

On one occasion, Jesus said to the multitude, "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man" (Matthew 15:11.)

I have believed that as I have heard men and women, and boys and girls, profane.

President George Q. Cannon, who served long and faithfully as a Counselor in the First Presidency, said on one occasion:

"Do angels take the Lord's name in vain? The idea is so ridiculous that we scarcely like to ask the question. . . . How dare we do that which angels dare not do? Is it possible for us to argue that that which is forbidden in heaven is praiseworthy on earth? . . .

"Though we are sure no boy can tell us any advantage that can arise from the abuse of God's holy name, yet we can tell him many evils that arise therefrom. To begin," Brother Cannon said, "it is unnecessary and consequently foolish; it lessens our respect for holy things and leads us into the society of the wicked; it brings upon us the disrespect of the good who avoid us; it leads us to other sins, for he who is willing to abuse his Creator is not ashamed to defraud his fellow creature; and also by so doing we directly and knowingly break one of the most direct of God's commandments" ("Editorial Thoughts," *Juvenile Instructor*, 27 Sept. 1873, p. 156).

Brethren, stay out of the gutter in your conversation. Foul talk defiles the man who speaks it.

How to break the habit

If you have the habit, how do you break it? You begin by making a decision to change. The next time you are prone to use words you know to be wrong, simply stop. Keep quiet or say what you have to say in a different way. As you practice such restraint, it will become easy. President Heber J. Grant was wont to say, "That which we persist in doing becomes easier for us to do; not that the nature of the thing itself is changed, but that our power to do is increased" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1901, p. 63).

We begin with self-discipline. Shakespeare put these words in the mouth of Hamlet:

*Refrain tonight,
And that shall lend a kind of
easiness
To the next abstinence: the next
more easy;
For use almost can change the
stamp of nature,
And either master the devil, or
throw him out
With wondrous potency.
(Hamlet, act 3, scene 4, lines
165-70)*

"Be thou an example in word"

Can you think of a missionary in this church using the kind of language heard on many high school campuses? Of course not. Such would be totally out of character with his calling as an ambassador of the Lord.

Most of you boys who are here tonight are prospective missionaries. It is as wrong for you to use foul language as it would be for a missionary because you also hold the priesthood. You have authority to act in the name of God. Remember that it is the same voice which prays to the Lord on the one hand and which, on the other hand, when in the company of friends, may be inclined so to speak language foul and filthy. The two kinds of voices are incompatible.

Paul, perhaps the greatest missionary of all time, wrote to Timothy, his young associate in the ministry. "Let no man despise thy youth," he said, "but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).

Note what he says: "Be thou an example *in word*." He is speaking here of language. I think he is speaking of the things of which I have been speaking. He is saying that coarse and lewd words are incompatible with one's calling as a believer in Christ.

"In conversation"—he is saying again that in our dialogues with others we must be an example of the believer. Conversation is the substance of friendly social activity. It can be happy. It can be light. It can be earnest. It can be funny. But it must not be salty, or uncouth, or foul if one is in sincerity a believer in Christ.

Profane language a tragedy

Perhaps you feel I have belabored the point unduly. If I have done so, it is because I feel it is so very important. It is a tragic and unnecessary thing that boys and girls use foul language. It is inexcusable for a girl so to speak. It is likewise serious for the boy who holds the priesthood. This practice is totally unacceptable for one authorized to speak in the name of God. To blaspheme His holy name or to speak in language that is debauched is offensive to God and man.

The man or the boy who must resort to such language immediately says that he is poverty-ridden in his vocabulary. He does not enjoy sufficient richness of expression to be able to speak effectively without swearing or using foul words.

Blessings of virtuous language

I have so spoken to you tonight because I think some of you may have been indulging in this practice, at least

walls of your own home. Home teaching, bishopric's work, and other Church duties are all important, but the most important work is within the walls of your home" (*Strengthening the Home* [pamphlet, 1973], p. 7).

What, then, is a father's specific responsibility within the sacred walls of his home? May I suggest two basic responsibilities of every father in Israel.

Provide for material needs

First, you have a sacred responsibility to provide for the material needs of your family.

The Lord clearly defined the roles of providing for and rearing a righteous posterity. In the beginning, Adam, not Eve, was instructed to earn the bread by the sweat of his brow.

The Apostle Paul counsels husbands and fathers, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Timothy 5:8).

Early in the history of the restored Church, the Lord specifically charged men with the obligation to provide for their wives and family. In January of 1832 He said, "Verily I say unto you, that every man who is obliged to provide for his own family, let him provide, and he shall in nowise lose his crown" (D&C 75:28). Three months later the Lord said again, "Women have claim on their husbands for their maintenance, until their husbands are taken" (D&C 83:2). This is the divine right of a wife and mother. While she cares for and nourishes her children at home, her husband earns the living for the family, which makes this nourishing possible.

In a home where there is an able-bodied husband, he is expected to be the breadwinner. Sometimes we hear of husbands who, because of economic conditions, have lost their jobs and expect the wives to go out of the home and work, even though the husband is still capable of providing for his family. In these cases, we urge the husband to do all in his power to allow his wife to

remain in the home caring for the children while he continues to provide for his family the best he can, even though the job he is able to secure may not be ideal and family budgeting may have to be tighter.

Also, the need for education or material things does not justify the postponing of children in order to keep the wife working as the breadwinner of the family.

Counsel of President Kimball

I remember the counsel of our beloved prophet Spencer W. Kimball to married students. He said: "I have told tens of thousands of young folks that when they marry they should not wait for children until they have finished their schooling and financial desires. . . . They should live together normally and let the children come. . . .

" . . . I know of no scriptures," President Kimball continued, "where an authorization is given to young wives to withhold their families and go to work to put their husbands through school. There are thousands of husbands who have worked their own way through school and have reared families at the same time" ("Marriage Is Honorable," in *Speeches of the Year, 1973* [Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1974], p. 263).

A mother's role in the home

Brethren of the priesthood, I continue to emphasize the importance of mothers staying home to nurture, care for, and train their children in the principles of righteousness.

As I travel throughout the Church, I feel that the great majority of Latter-day Saint mothers earnestly want to follow this counsel. But we know that sometimes the mother works outside of the home at the encouragement, or even insistence, of her husband. It is he who wants the items of convenience that the extra income can buy. Not only will the family suffer in such instances,

in a measure. I hope that you will accept what I have said in the spirit intended. If you have been using such language and your friends are with you in this priesthood meeting, then unitedly resolve to help one another. Should there be a slip of the tongue, then remind one another. I hope you will do so. By so doing, you will honor your Heavenly Father. You will honor His Beloved Son. You will honor the priesthood which you hold. You will bring credit to the homes from which you come. You will honor yourself and be proud of your capacity to discipline your language.

I say this to the boys. I say it also to any of you older men who have a similar problem. I do so with love. I know that the Lord is pleased when we use clean and virtuous language, for He has set an example for us. His revelations are couched in words that are affirmative, that are uplifting, that encourage us to do what is right and to go forward in truth and goodness.

Don't swear. Don't profane. Avoid so-called dirty jokes. Stay away from conversation that is sprinkled with foul and filthy words. You will be happier if you do so, and your example will give strength to others. May you be

blessed so to do, I humbly pray, my beloved brethren, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We shall now be privileged to hear the counsel of President Ezra Taft Benson, our beloved prophet and leader. He will be our concluding speaker.

Before President Benson speaks, we note that the nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 Sunday morning. Those desiring to attend must be in their seats in the Tabernacle before 9:15 A.M.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We are grateful to you brethren from the Tabernacle Choir and the Mormon Youth Chorus for your inspiring participation this evening. We express sincere appreciation.

Following President Benson's closing remarks, the choir will sing "Rise Up, O Men of God." The benediction will be offered by Elder Philip T. Sonntag of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

President Ezra Taft Benson

My dear brethren, I am grateful to be here with you in this glorious assembly of the priesthood of God. I pray that the Spirit of the Lord will be with me and with you as I address you on a most vital subject. This evening I would like to speak to the fathers assembled here and throughout the Church about their sacred callings.

I hope you young men will also listen carefully, inasmuch as you are now preparing to become the future fathers of the Church.

An eternal calling

Fathers, yours is an eternal calling from which you are never released. Callings in the Church, as important as they are, by their very nature are only for a period of time, and then an appropriate release takes place. But a father's calling is eternal, and its importance transcends time. It is a calling for both time and eternity.

President Harold B. Lee truly stated that "the most important of the Lord's work that you [fathers] will ever do will be the work you do within the

brethren, but your own spiritual growth and progression will be hampered. I say to all of you, the Lord has charged men with the responsibility to provide for their families in such a way that the wife is allowed to fulfill her role as mother in the home.

Family preparedness more urgent today

Fathers, another vital aspect of providing for the material needs of your family is the provision you should be making for your family in case of an emergency. Family preparedness has been a long-established welfare principle. It is even more urgent today.

I ask you earnestly, have you provided for your family a year's supply of food, clothing, and, where possible, fuel? The revelation to produce and store food may be as essential to our temporal welfare today as boarding the ark was to the people in the days of Noah.

Also, are you living within your income and saving a little?

Are you honest with the Lord in the payment of your tithes? Living this divine law will bring both spiritual and material blessings.

Yes, brethren, as fathers in Israel you have a great responsibility to provide for the material needs of your family and to have the necessary provisions in case of emergency.

Provide spiritual leadership

Second, you have a sacred responsibility to provide spiritual leadership in your family.

In a pamphlet published some years ago by the Council of the Twelve, we said the following: "Fatherhood is leadership, the most important kind of leadership. It has always been so; it always will be so. Father, with the assistance and counsel and encouragement of your eternal companion, you preside in the home" (*Father,*

Consider Your Ways [pamphlet, 1973], pp. 4-5).

However, along with that presiding position come important obligations. We sometimes hear accounts of men, even in the Church, who think that being head of the home somehow puts them in a superior role and allows them to dictate and make demands upon their family.

The Apostle Paul points out that "the husband is the head of the wife, *even as Christ is the head of the church*" (Ephesians 5:23; italics added). That is the model we are to follow in our role of presiding in the home. We do not find the Savior leading the Church with a harsh or unkind hand. We do not find the Savior treating His Church with disrespect or neglect. We do not find the Savior using force or coercion to accomplish His purposes. Nowhere do we find the Savior doing anything but that which edifies, uplifts, comforts, and exalts the Church. Brethren, I say to you with all soberness, He is the model we must follow as we take the spiritual lead in our families.

Particularly is this true in your relationship with your wife.

Love your wives

Here again the counsel from the Apostle Paul is most beautiful and to the point. He said simply, "Husbands, love your wives, *even as Christ also loved the church*" (Ephesians 5:25).

In latter-day revelation the Lord speaks again of this obligation. He said, "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else" (D&C 42:22). To my knowledge there is only one other thing in all scripture that we are commanded to love with all our hearts, and that is God Himself. Think what that means!

This kind of love can be shown for your wives in so many ways. First and foremost, nothing except God Himself takes priority over your wife in your life—not work, not recreation, not hobbies. Your wife is your precious, eternal helpmate—your companion.

What does it mean to love someone with all your heart? It means to love with all your emotional feelings and with all your devotion. Surely when you love your wife with all your heart, you cannot demean her, criticize her, find fault with her, or abuse her by words, sullen behavior, or actions.

What does it mean to "cleave unto her"? It means to stay close to her, to be loyal and faithful to her, to communicate with her, and to express your love for her.

Love means being sensitive to her feelings and needs. She wants to be noticed and treasured. She wants to be told that you view her as lovely and attractive and important to you. Love means putting her welfare and self-esteem as a high priority in your life.

You should be grateful that she is the mother of your children and the queen of your home, grateful that she has chosen homemaking and motherhood—to bear, to nourish, to love, and to train your children—as the noblest calling of all.

Husbands, recognize your wife's intelligence and her ability to counsel with you as a real partner regarding family plans, family activities, and family budgeting. Don't be stingy with your time or with your means.

Give her the opportunity to grow intellectually, emotionally, and socially as well as spiritually.

Remember, brethren, love can be nurtured and nourished by little tokens. Flowers on special occasions are wonderful, but so is your willingness to help with the dishes, change diapers, get up with a crying child in the night, and leave the television or the newspaper to help with the dinner. Those are the quiet ways we say "I love you" with our actions. They bring rich dividends for such little effort.

This kind of loving priesthood leadership applies to your children as well as to your wife.

A father's role in the home

Mothers play an important role as the heart of the home, but this in no way lessens the equally important role fathers should play, as head of the home, in nurturing, training, and loving their children.

As the patriarch in your home, you have a serious responsibility to assume leadership in working with your children. You must help create a home where the Spirit of the Lord can abide. Your place is to give direction to all family life. You should take an active part in establishing family rules and discipline.

Your homes should be havens of peace and joy for your family. Surely no child should fear his own father—especially a priesthood father. A father's duty is to make his home a place of happiness and joy. He cannot do this when there is bickering, quarreling, contention, or unrighteous behavior. The powerful effect of righteous fathers in setting an example, disciplining and training, nurturing and loving is vital to the spiritual welfare of his children.

Give spiritual leadership

With love in my heart for the fathers in Israel, may I suggest ten specific ways that fathers can give spiritual leadership to their children:

1. Give father's blessings to your children. Baptize and confirm your children. Ordain your sons to the priesthood. These will become spiritual highlights in the lives of your children.

2. Personally direct family prayers, daily scripture reading, and weekly family home evenings. Your personal involvement will show your children how important these activities really are.

3. Whenever possible, attend Church meetings together as a family. Family worship under your leadership is vital to your children's spiritual welfare.

4. Go on daddy-daughter dates and father-and-sons' outings with your with your children. As a family, go on campouts and picnics, to ball games and recitals, to school programs, and so forth. Having Dad there makes all the difference.

5. Build traditions of family vacations and trips and outings. These memories will never be forgotten by your children.

6. Have regular one-on-one visits with your children. Let them talk about what they would like to. Teach them gospel principles. Teach them true values. Tell them you love them. Personal time with your children tells them where Dad puts his priorities.

7. Teach your children to work, and show them the value of working toward a worthy goal. Establishing mission funds and education funds for your children shows them what Dad considers to be important.

8. Encourage good music and art and literature in your homes. Homes that have a spirit of refinement and beauty will bless the lives of your children forever.

9. As distances allow, regularly attend the temple with your wife. Your children will then better understand the importance of temple marriage and

temple vows and the eternal family unit.

10. Have your children see your joy and satisfaction in service to the Church. This can become contagious to them, so they, too, will want to serve in the Church and will love the kingdom.

Your most important calling

Oh, husbands and fathers in Israel, you can do so much for the salvation and exaltation of your families! Your responsibilities are so important.

Remember your sacred calling as a father in Israel—your most important calling in time and eternity—a calling from which you will never be released.

May you always provide for the material needs of your family and, with your eternal companion at your side, may you fulfill your sacred responsibility to provide the spiritual leadership in your home.

To this end I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Rise Up, O Men of God."

Elder Philip T. Sonntag offered the benediction.

SECOND DAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 157th Semiannual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 4, 1987. President Ezra Taft Benson presided, and President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Brothers Jerold Otley and Donald Ripplinger conducting and Brother Robert Cundick at the organ.

Before the session, the choir sang "The Morning Breaks" without announcement.

President Monson made the following remarks:

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this morning from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, in this, the fourth general session of the 157th semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Our beloved prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson, who presides at this and all sessions of the conference, has asked me to conduct.

We welcome you who are participating in the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle and in the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Gene R. Cook and H. Burke Peterson are seated on the stand. We also extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the stations who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders, and officers and members of the Church from many lands who have assembled to worship and to counsel together in this conference.

The Tabernacle Choir is providing the music for this session under the direction of Brothers Jerold Ottley and

Donald Ripplinger, with Brother Robert Cundick at the organ.

The choir opened these services by singing "The Morning Breaks," and will now sing "The Lord My Pasture Will Prepare," following which Elder Theodore M. Burton, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "The Lord My Pasture Will Prepare."

Elder Theodore M. Burton offered the invocation.

The choir sang "I Will Lift Up Mine Eyes" without announcement.

President Monson

The Tabernacle Choir has just sung "I Will Lift Up Mine Eyes." President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will now be our first speaker.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

I add my word of welcome to all who are gathered in this great conference. It has veritably become a world conference. We now speak to congregations throughout North America and instantaneously reach to some across the seas. Hundreds of thousands are gathered this morning to hear the word of the Lord. I thank you for your faith and your desires, and seek the direction of the Holy Spirit.

"Lord, Increase our faith"

Let me tell you of an experience I had with one of our Area Presidents. We were in a land where, to our knowledge, there was not a member of the Church among the millions of that nation.

There was a man who knew of the Church and desired baptism. He had been a longtime student of the Bible.

He belonged to a Christian church but was not satisfied. The thought came into his mind that he should belong to a church that carried the name of the Savior. In an old encyclopedia in a public library, he found listed The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with headquarters in Salt Lake City. He wrote a letter of inquiry and received a response with literature. Other literature followed as he requested it.

When we met him he had read the Book of Mormon again and again. He had read the Doctrine and Covenants and other Church writings. With enthusiasm he had told his friends of his treasured find. He asked to be baptized.

We questioned him. He knew of the priesthood, its orders and its offices. He knew of the various ordinances and the procedures of our meetings.

Did he believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God? Oh, yes, he knew it to be true. He had read it. He had prayed about it and pondered. He had no doubt of its truth.

Did he believe Joseph Smith to be a prophet of God? Most assuredly. Again, he had studied and prayed. He was convinced of the reality of that glorious vision when God the Eternal Father and His Beloved Son, the resurrected Lord, appeared to the boy Joseph to usher in a new and final dispensation of gospel truth.

The priesthood had been restored with all its gifts and powers. He knew that. Our friend asked for baptism and hoped for the priesthood that he might teach and act with proper authority.

"But," we said, "if we baptize you and then leave, you will be left alone. While there are many Christians in your nation, and freedom of religion is guaranteed under its laws, there are severe restrictions concerning foreigners. There will be no one to teach you and help you. There will be no one on whom you can lean."

He responded, "God will teach me and help me, and He will be my friend and support."

I looked into the eyes of that good man and saw the light of faith. We baptized him under the authority of the holy priesthood. We confirmed him a member of the Church and bestowed upon him the Holy Ghost. We baptized his wife. We conferred upon him the Aaronic Priesthood and ordained him to the office of priest so that under proper direction they might have the sacrament.

We held a sacrament and testimony meeting with them. We embraced them and said good-bye to one another, and tears were in our eyes. They left to return to their home, and we left for responsibilities in other nations.

I shall never forget him. He is poor in the things of the world. But he is educated—a teacher by profession. I know little of his circumstances. But

this I know—when we talked with him, the fire of faith burned in his heart, and our own faith was quickened also.

As we traveled from that scene and there was time to meditate, I wished that faith of his kind was found more widely, both among us and among others. His example has provided a text for me. It is found in the fifth verse of the seventeenth chapter of Luke. Jesus had been teaching his disciples by precept and parable. "And the apostles said unto the Lord, *Increase our faith*" (italics added).

Forged letters

This is my prayer for all of us—"Lord, Increase our faith." Increase our faith to bridge the chasms of uncertainty and doubt. As most of you know, in the last four or five years we have passed through an interesting episode in the history of the Church. There came into our hands two letters that were seized upon by the media when we announced them. They were trumpeted across much of the world as documents that would challenge the authenticity of the Church. In announcing them we stated that they really had nothing to do with the essentials of our history. But some few of little faith, who seemingly are always quick to believe the negative, accepted as fact the pronouncements and predictions of the media. I recall a letter from an individual who asked that his name be taken from the records of the Church because he could no longer believe in a church that had to do with an experience with a salamander.

Now, as you know, these letters, together with other documents, have been acknowledged by their forger to be total frauds and part of an evil and devious design which culminated in the murder of two individuals.

I have wondered what those whose faith was shaken have thought since the forger confessed to his evil work.

However, I hasten to add, the vast majority of Church members, all but a very few, paid little attention and went forward with their faithful service, living by a conviction firmly grounded in that knowledge which comes by the power of the Holy Ghost. They knew then and they know now that God watches over this work, that Jesus Christ is the head of this Church, that it is true, and that happiness and growth come of following its precepts and teachings.

The Church's origin is divine

Out of this earlier episode has now arisen another phenomenon. It is described as the writing of a "new history" of the Church as distinguished from the "old history." It represents, among other things, an effort to ferret out every element of folk magic and the occult in the environment in which Joseph Smith lived to explain what he did and why.

I have no doubt there was folk magic practiced in those days. Without question there were superstitions and the superstitious. I suppose there was some of this in the days when the Savior walked the earth. There is even some in this age of so-called enlightenment. For instance, some hotels and business buildings skip the numbering of floor thirteen. Does this mean there is something wrong with the building? Of course not. Or with the builders? No.

Similarly, the fact that there were superstitions among the people in the days of Joseph Smith is no evidence whatever that the Church came of such superstition.

Seek the truth in faith

Joseph Smith himself wrote or dictated his history. It is his testimony of what occurred, and he sealed that testimony with his life. It is written in language clear and plain and unmistakable. From an ancient record he translated the Book of Mormon by the gift and power of God. It is here for all to

see and handle and read. Those who have read with faith and inquired in prayer have come to a certain knowledge that it is true. The present effort of trying to find some other explanation for the organization of the Church, for the origin of the Book of Mormon, and for the priesthood with its keys and powers will be similar to other anti-Mormon fads which have come and blossomed and faded. Truth will prevail. A knowledge of that truth comes by effort and study, yes. But it comes primarily as a gift from God to those who seek in faith.

Church expansion a consequence of increased faith

My constant prayer in behalf of the entire Church is this: Lord, increase our faith to rise above the feeble detractors of this Thy great and holy work. Strengthen our will. Help us to build and expand Thy kingdom according to Thy great mandate, that this gospel may be preached in all the world as a witness unto all nations.

I have seen answers to that prayer. I have seen the miracle of the expansion of this cause and kingdom and can testify of it.

The fruits of faith in Asia

In 1960, only twenty-seven years ago, I was given an assignment by the First Presidency to work with the mission presidents, the missionaries, and the Saints in Asia. The Church was weak and small in that part of the earth. The seed had been planted in Japan, Taiwan, and Korea by faithful Latter-day Saints in military service. But it was tiny and unstable. We had no buildings of our own. We met as small groups in rented houses. In winter they were cold and uncomfortable. Converts came into the Church. But some, lacking faith, soon left. However, there remained a residual of strong and wonderful men and women who looked beyond the adversity of the moment. They found their strength in the

message, not in the facilities. They have remained faithful to this day, and their numbers have been added to by the tens and tens of thousands.

A few Sundays back we held a regional conference in Tokyo. The spacious hall was filled to capacity. There were almost as many present on that occasion as there are assembled in the Salt Lake Tabernacle this morning. The Spirit of the Lord was there. An attitude of faith filled that vast congregation. For me, who had known those days when we were weak and few in number, it was a miracle to behold, for which I give thanks to the Lord.

We had a similar experience in Hong Kong, where there are now four stakes of Zion.

Then in Seoul, Korea, my heart was touched as we entered the largest hall in that great city to find every seat taken by members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and their invited guests. A magnificent choir of 320 voices opened with the strains "Oh, how lovely was the morning" ("Joseph Smith's First Prayer," *Hymns* [1985], no. 26). It was a moving expression of the first vision of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

I had known South Korea in its days of poverty and reconstruction following the terrible war. When first I went there, we had six missionaries in Seoul and two in Pusan. Some were ill with hepatitis. Today there are four thriving missions in that land, with some six hundred missionaries. Many of the missionaries are sons and daughters of Korea. They include bright and beautiful young women in whose hearts burns the light of faith. They include young men who leave schooling for a season in order to serve missions. These young men are under tremendous pressures because of military requirements as well as educational demands, but they have faith in their hearts.

When first I went to South Korea, there were two or three tiny branches. Today there are one hundred fifty local units of the Church, both wards and branches. Then it was a small, isolated

district of the Northern Far East Mission. We had no chapels. Today there are fourteen stakes with forty-seven chapels built and owned and another fifty-two under lease, with others under construction.

I felt a spirit in that congregation three weeks ago that touched me to the depths of my soul. I saw the sweet fruits of faith. I knew of the early struggles in establishing an unknown church. I knew of the poverty of the people. Now there is strength. There is an undreamed-of measure of prosperity. There is a warm spirit of fellowship. There are families of devoted husbands and wives and good and beautiful children.

These are people I love, and I love them because of their faith. They are intelligent and well educated. They are hardworking and progressive. They are humble and prayerful. They are an example to others across the world.

The power of faith

I say again, as did the Apostles to Jesus, "Lord, Increase our faith." Grant us faith to look beyond the problems of the moment to the miracles of the future. Give us faith to pay our tithes and offerings and put our trust in Thee, the Almighty, to open the windows of heaven as Thou hast promised. Give us faith to do what is right and let the consequence follow.

Grant us faith when storms of adversity beat us down and drive us to the ground. In seasons of sickness may our confidence wax strong in the powers of the priesthood. May we follow the counsel of James:

"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

"And the *prayer of faith* shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up" (James 5:14-15; italics added).

He who will follow me in speaking, President Howard W. Hunter, is a shining example of the efficacy of such faith.

Lord, when we walk in the valley of the shadow of death, give us faith to smile through our tears, knowing that it is all part of the eternal plan of a loving Father, that as we cross the threshold from this life we enter another more glorious, and that through the atonement of the Son of God all shall rise from the grave and the faithful shall go on to exaltation.

Give us faith to pursue the work of redemption of the dead that Thine eternal purposes may be fulfilled in behalf of Thy sons and daughters of all generations.

Father, grant us faith to follow counsel in the little things that can mean so very much. Our President, he whom we sustain as prophet, has repeatedly, since he was called to this responsibility, asked us to read that other great witness for the Lord Jesus Christ, the Book of Mormon. Tens of thousands have now done so to their great blessing. They could testify, Sweet are the rewards of simple faith.

Lord, increase our faith in one another, and in ourselves, and in our capacity to do good and great things.

This, my brothers and sisters, is my prayer.

Elijah's faithful obedience

There is a simple and moving story in the book of 1 Kings. Permit me to read you a few lines:

"And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be

dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

"And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying,

"Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.

"And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.

"So he [Elijah] *went and did* according unto the word of the Lord" (1 Kings 17:1-5; italics added).

There was no argument. There was no discussion. There was no rationalizing on the part of Elijah. He simply "*went and did.*"

Our greatest need

Father, increase our faith. Of all our needs, I think the greatest is an increase in faith. And so, dear Father, increase our faith in Thee, and in Thy Beloved Son, in Thy great eternal work, in ourselves as Thy children, and in our capacity to go and do according to Thy will, and Thy precepts, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has addressed us.

The Tabernacle Choir will now sing "Lovely Appear," following which President Howard W. Hunter, Acting President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will address us.

The choir sang "Lovely Appear."

President Howard W. Hunter

Forgive me if I remain seated while I present these few remarks. It is not by choice that I speak from a wheel-

chair. I notice that the rest of you seem to enjoy the conference sitting down, so I will follow your example.

Where one door closes, another opens

With reference to both standing and sitting, I have observed that life—every life—has a full share of ups and downs. Indeed, we see many joys and sorrows in the world, many changed plans and new directions, many blessings that do not always look or feel like blessings, and much that humbles us and improves our patience and our faith. We have all had those experiences from time to time, and I suppose we always will.

A passage from one of the greatest prophetic sermons ever given—King Benjamin's masterful discourse to the people of Zarahemla in the Book of Mormon—reads this way:

"Men drink damnation to their own souls except they humble themselves and become as little children. . . .

"For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father" (Mosiah 3:18–19).

Being childlike and submitting to our Father's will is not always easy. President Spencer W. Kimball, who knew a good deal about suffering, disappointment, and circumstances beyond his control, once wrote:

"Being human, we would expel from our lives physical pain and mental anguish and assure ourselves of continual ease and comfort, but if we were to close the doors upon sorrow and distress, we might be excluding our greatest friends and benefactors. Suffering can make saints of people as they learn patience, long-suffering, and self-mastery" (*Faith Precedes the Miracle*

[Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1972], p. 98).

In that statement, President Kimball refers to closing doors upon certain experiences in life. That image brings to mind a line from Cervantes' great classic, *Don Quixote*, that has given me comfort over the years. In that masterpiece, we find the short but very important reminder that where one door closes, another opens. Doors close regularly in our lives, and some of those closings cause genuine pain and heartache. But I *do* believe that where one such door closes, another opens (and perhaps more than one), with hope and blessings in other areas of our lives that we might not have discovered otherwise.

Adversity proves and prepares us

Our beloved quorum president, Marion G. Romney, is not able to be with us here today. My, how we miss his companionship and his wit, his experience and his leadership! President Romney has had some doors swing closed for him even in the work of his ministry. He has known considerable pain and discouragement and has seen his plans changed during these past few years. But it was he who, from this very pulpit a few years ago, said that all men and women, including the most faithful and loyal, would find adversity and affliction in their lives because, in the words of Joseph Smith, "Men have to suffer that they may come upon Mount Zion and be exalted above the heavens" (*History of the Church*, 5:556; see Conference Report, Oct. 1969, p. 57; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1969, p. 66).

President Romney then said:

"This does not mean that we crave suffering. We avoid all we can. However, we now know, and we all knew when we elected to come into mortality, that we would here be proved in the crucible of adversity and affliction. . . .

"[Furthermore,] the Father's plan for proving [and refining] his children

did not exempt the Savior himself. The suffering he undertook to endure, and which he did endure, equaled the combined suffering of all men [and women everywhere. Trembling and bleeding and wishing to shrink from the cup, he said,] 'I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men.' (D&C 19:18-19.)" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1969, p. 57; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1969, pp. 66-67).

All of us must finish our "preparations unto the children of men." Christ's preparations were quite different from our own, but we all have preparations to make, doors to open. To make such important preparations often will require some pain, some unexpected changes in life's path, and some submitting, "even as a child doth submit to his father." Finishing divine preparations and opening celestial doors may take us—indeed, undoubtedly will take us—right up to the concluding hours of our mortal lives.

Adversity comes to all

We all miss our beloved brother Elder A. Theodore Tuttle, who recently opened a new door to return to his heavenly home. His preparations in mortality had been fully completed for such a journey. He, too, like President Romney, stood in this tabernacle and spoke of adversity, adversity that he knew would come to each of us but that he may not then have known would come to him as early as it did.

He said:

"Adversity, in one form or another, is the universal experience of man. It is the common lot of all . . . to experience misfortune, suffering, sickness, or other adversities. Ofttimes our work is arduous and unnecessarily demanding. Our faith is tried in various ways—sometimes unjustly tried [it seems]. At times it seems that even God is punishing us and ours. One of the things that makes all this so hard to bear is that we ourselves appear to be chosen for this affliction while others presumably escape these adversities. . . .

"[But] we cannot indulge ourselves the luxury of self-pity" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1967, pp. 14-15; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1967, p. 47).

Elder Tuttle then left us these lines from Robert Browning Hamilton titled "Along the Road," which teach a lesson on pleasure and a lesson on sorrow:

*I walked a mile with Pleasure.
She chattered all the way,
But left me none the wiser
For all she had to say.
I walked a mile with Sorrow,
And ne'er a word said she;
But, oh, the things I learned from
her
When Sorrow walked with me!*

And now this mortal portion of Elder Tuttle's journey is over. He closed that door and opened another. Now he walks and talks with the angels. And so, someday, will we close and open those same doors.

Opposition in all things

I have mentioned the lives of two of our contemporary brethren. Obviously, prophets of an earlier day have known adversity and difficulty as well. They were not spared these challenges any more than our generation has been spared. The great Book of Mormon patriarch, Lehi, spoke encouragingly to his son Jacob, a son born in the wilderness in a time of travail and opposition. Jacob's life was not as he might have expected it to be and not as the ideal course of experience might have outlined. He had suffered afflictions and setbacks, but Lehi promised that such afflictions would be consecrated for his son's gain (see 2 Nephi 2:2).

Then Lehi added these words that have become classic:

"For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, . . . righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad" (2 Nephi 2:11).

Trials help us learn and grow

I have taken great comfort over the years in this explanation of some of life's pain and disappointment. I take even greater comfort that the greatest of men and women, including the Son of God, have faced such opposition in order to better understand the contrast between righteousness and wickedness, holiness and misery, good and bad. From out of the dark, damp confinement of Liberty Jail, the Prophet Joseph Smith learned that if we are called to pass through tribulation, it is for our growth and experience and will ultimately be counted for our good (see D&C 122:5-8).

Where one door shuts, another opens, even for a prophet in prison. We are not always wise enough nor experienced enough to judge adequately all of the possible entries and exits. The mansion that God prepares for each of his beloved children may have only certain hallways and banisters, special carpets and curtains that he would have us pass on our way to possess it.

I share the view expressed by Orson F. Whitney in these words:

"No pain that we suffer, no trial that we experience is wasted. It ministers to our education, to the development of such qualities as patience, faith, fortitude and humility. All that we suffer and all that we endure, especially when we endure it patiently, builds up our characters, purifies our hearts, expands our souls, and makes us more tender and charitable, more worthy to be called the children of God . . . and it is through sorrow and suffering, toil and tribulation, that we gain the education that we come here to acquire and which will make us more like our Father and Mother in heaven" (as quoted in *Faith Precedes the Miracle*, p. 98).

At various times in our lives, probably at repeated times in our lives, we do have to acknowledge that God knows what we do not know and sees what we do not see. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are

your ways my ways, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 55:8).

May peace be unto your soul

If you have troubles at home with children who stray, if you suffer financial reverses and emotional strain that threaten your homes and your happiness, if you must face the loss of life or health, may peace be unto your soul. We will not be tempted beyond our ability to withstand. Our detours and disappointments are the straight and narrow path to Him, as we sing in one of our favorite hymns:

*When through fiery trials thy
pathway shall lie,
My grace, all sufficient, shall be
thy supply.
The flame shall not hurt thee;
I only design
Thy dress to consume and thy gold
to refine.
("How Firm a Foundation," Hymns
[1985], no. 85)*

May God bless us in the ups and downs of life, in the opening and closing of doors, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Jehovah, Lord of Heaven and Earth" without announcement.

President Monson

We have just heard from President Howard W. Hunter, Acting President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, a man intimately acquainted with the subject which he addressed so beautifully. Then the choir sang "Jehovah, Lord of Heaven and Earth."

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "High on the Mountain Top," following which we shall hear from Elder Robert L. Backman, a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang
 "High on the Mountain Top."

Elder Robert L. Backman

Preparing for missions

This summer, our first grandson was called on a mission. We watched with anticipation and excitement as he prepared for that great adventure. We saw a transformation take place as he experienced his farewell, his temple endowment, and his entrance into the Missionary Training Center. It was a literal miracle to see a typical selfish teenage boy become a selfless servant of God. He became a man overnight. We thrilled at his letters from the Training Center in which he told his friends to get with it—that "this" is where it's at. We saw a new boldness as he became immersed in his mission. That boldness and spirit have been increased now that he is in the mission field teaching what he believes.

Let me share a portion of a letter he wrote to a nonmember friend who is investigating the Church:

"It's great to hear you've taken the discussions. They are really cool. Let me tell you something about commitment. You have just got to make it. Get committed! Read the Book of Mormon. I did it in nine days, and I only read for one and a half hours a day. Get committed to attend church every week. It is a commandment of God, and it's necessary for baptism. Get committed to pray. If you would read the Book of Mormon and pray about it, you would know that it is true. Finally, get committed to baptism. Christ did it, and you have to, too. I suspect that you know the gospel is true, or you wouldn't put up with it. Remember, God knows you know it; and if you don't make the commitment, he will still hold you ac-

countable because you know the truth. Being lukewarm in the gospel doesn't do anyone any good—especially you!"

As a grandfather, I exult when I see my own flesh and blood entering the Lord's service so well prepared and pray that my other grandchildren will respond as readily to the call as he has done.

In pondering what they could do to prepare to serve missions, I believe the best formula I could give them, and all the youth of the Church, is found in a single verse in the second chapter of Luke: "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (v. 52).

That one verse gives us an insight into what our Savior did to prepare for his ministry.

It tells us that Jesus Christ grew physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually!

As his disciples, can we do less?

Let us consider how we can prepare in the same manner so we can truly represent him.

Physical preparation

Missionary work is demanding. It imposes heavy physical and mental stress. It is not for weaklings. It requires good health, stamina, strength, and self-control.

A missionary gets a lot of exercise—he walks long distances, rides bicycles up hills, and has to survive his companion's cooking. He rises early, and he works hard until late at night.

Who does your cooking, sewing, ironing? Who makes your bed; who

sweeps the floor; who does the dishes; who presses your pants, launders your shirts, shines your shoes? Who reminds you to get up or to go to bed?

You would do well to become self-sufficient in these matters before you go on your mission. It is much easier to learn now from a loving mother, from sisters and the young women of the ward than to wait until you are forced to learn to survive.

In your youth, remember the importance of living the Word of Wisdom and the glorious promise that the Lord gives us when we do.

As part of your physical preparation, consider how your mission will be financed.

If you have not started a mission savings account, there is no better time than right now.

Do you know how to budget? Shop for groceries? Do without? Make do? If you don't, where and when are you going to learn?

Mental preparation

Before I could even practice law, I had to get through elementary school, high school, college, and graduate school. That required many years of study and education. And yet some of us seem to feel that we can understand the gospel of Jesus Christ, which embraces all truth, simply by attending church, making little effort to learn and practice its vital teachings.

As you prepare for your mission, remember the counsel of the old sage: "You can't teach what you don't know any more than you can come back from a place you ain't been."

How is your educational preparation? Do you love to learn? Do you know how to listen? To read? To study? To ponder? To memorize?

Are you reading the scriptures regularly, and understanding them? They were written to you and to me, not only to those who lived at the time they were penned.

President Ezra Taft Benson encouraged you to participate in a pro-

gram of daily reading and pondering of the scriptures, particularly the Book of Mormon. Think on his words:

"Young men, the Book of Mormon will change your life. It will fortify you against the evils of our day. It will bring a spirituality into your life that no other book will. It will be the most important book you will read in preparation for a mission and for life. A young man who knows and loves the Book of Mormon, who has read it several times, who has an abiding testimony of its truthfulness, and who applies its teachings will be able to stand against the wiles of the devil and will be a mighty tool in the hands of the Lord" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1986, p. 56; or *Ensign*, May 1986, p. 43).

What a promise from a prophet of God!

From the Missionary Training Center, my grandson wrote to a friend: "Read the Book of Mormon. . . . It is the best book I have ever read, and I am not just saying that."

You will be surprised how often you will draw on the scriptures to enrich your discussions, resolve concerns, and relate principles to real-life experiences.

I urge you to study a foreign language. That will open doors and provide opportunities that will serve you well, not only on your mission, but throughout your life.

Seminary provides a great opportunity to mentally prepare for your mission.

Social preparation

How do you like yourself?

A mission requires faith in self, and that comes from practice. It comes from understanding who you are as a child of God and what you can become.

A missionary soon discovers that whether he thinks he can or thinks he can't, he is right.

Do you honor and sustain the law? Are you dependable—a person of your word? There will not be another time in

your life when more trust and confidence will be exhibited in you.

Can you obey rules? Missions are run by rules.

Are you honest in your relationship with others? Do you like people?

Can you imagine living with another missionary twenty-four hours a day—and enjoying it?

What great lessons you will learn about the brotherhood of man in this microcosm of society!

One of the missionaries who served with me had a difficult time getting along with companions. I was required to transfer them frequently because they could not take it. Finally, I asked one of my finest missionaries to become his companion, urging him to do all he could to help his fellow missionary love his work. As I approached a conference in the city where they were laboring, I feared he, like his predecessors, would ask for a transfer. To my surprise, when I asked how he was getting along with his companion, he responded: "We are doing great! We discovered we had something in common. Neither of us has been to Africa!"

I promise you that you will make some of the most enduring friendships of your life. I look back on my own mission and the men I associated with there. They have had a powerful, positive effect on my life. They are among my closest friends.

Why is this so? Someone said, "A mission is like being dipped in a big pot of love!"

Recently, I attended a stake conference where a beautiful teenage girl told of her experience of working with a companionship of lady missionaries. With deep emotion she spoke of the love they exhibited toward everyone, friendly or unfriendly, responsive or abusive. They recognized that each person they met was truly a child of God, dearly loved by him. Could they do less? That love rubbed off on everyone they contacted, even warming their relationship with each other.

Spiritual preparation

God's truth can only be known through the Spirit of the Lord.

A missionary must be in tune with that Holy Spirit. He must recognize its guidance and inspiration. His life must be pure so he can count on that Spirit in all that he does.

How can you prepare to enjoy the Holy Spirit?

1. Keep your life clean—in thought and action. Immorality is Satan's most potent tool against us and leads to more unhappiness, grief, regret, and self-degradation than any other sin. It is deadly to our eternal progress. Avoid it like a plague.

2. Pray from your heart—then listen for God's answer.

3. Develop a testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ by practicing its teachings in your daily activities.

4. Stand up for what you believe. Set the standards for your life and don't be swayed by lower standards of others. You are in charge of your life!

5. Honor your priesthood, which has come to you from God and will serve as an armor for you throughout life as you respect its mighty power.

6. Set long-range goals. Determine in advance your course of action. Map out where you want to go and how you are going to get there. This will help you resist the temptations of Satan when they come—as they surely will.

7. Keep the commandments. That will lead to happiness and fulfillment.

8. We have discovered that the best way to prepare for a mission is to have the spiritual experience of teaching the gospel to others before you are called. We urge you to reach out to your friends, help teach them the gospel by teaming with the full-time or the stake missionaries, bearing your testimonies in that atmosphere. You will then become acquainted with how the Holy Spirit works to guide others to the truth, and you will recognize its sweet influence in your own experience.

You will understand, as Elisha's young servant came to understand when he discovered the city surrounded by the Syrian army. Running to Elisha in panic he asked, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?"

Elisha answered: "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them."

"And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (2 Kings 6:15-17).

When you are in tune with that Holy Spirit, you will be well armed to be the Lord's representative, prepared to teach and to testify, bringing souls to our Savior, Jesus Christ.

In last April's Regional Representatives' seminar, President Gordon B. Hinckley said: "In missionary work, as in all else, preparation precedes power. Encouragement to prepare while still very young can make a tremendous difference" (3 April 1987).

To my grandchildren, and to the youth of the Church wherever you are, I invite you to make the commitment to serve a mission. I invite you to become a part of the royal army of the Lord, to prepare yourselves physically, mentally, socially, spiritually—beginning right now.

President Benson has reminded you that you can do "nothing more important. School can wait. Scholarships can be deferred. Occupational goals can be postponed. Yes, even temple marriage should wait" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1986, p. 57; or *Ensign*, May 1986, p. 44).

With President Benson, I invite you to show your love and commitment

to the Lord by responding to His call to serve and joining your voice with thirty-four thousand other missionaries in singing:

*Called to serve Him, heav'nly
King of glory,
Chosen e'er to witness for his
name,
Far and wide we tell the Father's
story,
Far and wide his love proclaim.
Called to know the richness of his
blessing—
Sons and daughters, children of a
King—
Glad of heart, his holy name
confessing,
Praises unto him we bring.
Onward, ever onward, as we glory
in his name;
Onward, ever onward, as we glory
in his name;
Forward, pressing forward, as a
triumph song we sing.
God our strength will be; Press
forward ever,
Called to serve our King.
("Called to Serve," Hymns [1985],
no. 249)*

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52).

O youth of the Church, go and do likewise—be prepared to serve!

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Robert L. Backman, a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy, has just spoken to us.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will now address us.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

My dear brothers and sisters, I rejoice with you in the privilege of coming together on this beautiful Sabbath

day to worship our Father in Heaven and his Son Jesus Christ and to be instructed by their servants.

The Book of Mormon tells of the resurrected Lord visiting some of the people of the Americas. Clothed in a white robe, he descended out of heaven. Standing in the midst of a multitude, he stretched forth his hand and said:

"Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.

"And behold, I am the light and the life of the world" (3 Nephi 11:10-11).

He has repeated this declaration in many modern revelations (see D&C 12:9, 39:2, 45:7). In harmony with his words, we solemnly affirm that Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God the Eternal Father, is the light and life of the world.

Jesus Christ is the light and life of the world because all things were made by him. Under the direction and according to the plan of God the Father, Jesus Christ is the Creator, the source of the light and life of all things. Through modern revelation we have the testimony of John, who bore record that Jesus Christ is "the light and the Redeemer of the world; the Spirit of truth, who came into the world, because the world was made by him, and in him was the life of men and the light of men.

"The worlds were made by him; men were made by him; all things were made by him, and through him, and of him" (D&C 93:9-10).

The light of the world

Jesus Christ is the *light* of the world because he is the source of the light which "proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space" (D&C 88:12). His light is "the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (D&C 93:2; see also D&C 84:46). The scriptures call this universal light "the light of truth" (D&C 88:6), "the light of Christ" (D&C 88:7, Moroni 7:18), and the "Spirit of Christ" (Moroni 7:16). This is the light that quickens our understanding (see D&C 88:11). It is "the

light by which [we] may judge" (Moroni 7:18). It "is given to every man, that he may know good from evil" (Moroni 7:16).

Jesus Christ is also the light of the world because his example and his teachings illuminate the path we should walk to return to the presence of our Father in Heaven. Before Jesus was born, Zacharias prophesied that the Lord God of Israel would visit his people "to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide [their] feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:79).

During his ministry Jesus taught, "Behold I am the light; I have set an example for you" (3 Nephi 18:16). Later, he told his Apostles, "Hold up your light that it may shine unto the world," adding, "Behold, I am the light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do" (3 Nephi 18:24). He taught the Nephite multitude, "Ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do" (3 Nephi 27:21).

The Savior emphasized the close relationship between his light and his commandments when he taught the Nephites, "Behold I am the law, and the light" (3 Nephi 15:9).

The Psalmist expressed that relationship: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105).

As the Lord led Lehi and his people out of Jerusalem, he said, "I will also be your light in the wilderness; and I will prepare the way before you, if it so be that ye shall keep my commandments" (1 Nephi 17:13).

As we keep the Lord's commandments, we see his light ever brighter on our path and we realize the fulfillment of Isaiah's promise, "And the Lord shall guide thee continually" (Isaiah 58:11).

Jesus Christ is also the light of the world because his power persuades us to do good. The prophet Mormon taught: "All things which are good cometh of God; . . .

"Wherefore, every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God" (Moroni 7:12-13). Mormon's words anticipate what the Lord later told Moroni while he was compiling the Book of Mormon: "He that believeth these things which I have spoken . . . shall know that these things are true; for it persuadeth men to do good."

"And whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do good is of me; for good cometh of none save it be of me. . . . I am the light, and the life, and the truth of the world" (Ether 4:11-12; see also D&C 11:12).

And so we see that Jesus Christ is the *light* of the world because he is the source of the light that quickens our understanding, because his teachings and his example illuminate our path, and because his power persuades us to do good.

The life of the world

Jesus Christ is the *life* of the world because of his unique position in what the scriptures call "the great and eternal plan of deliverance from death" (2 Nephi 11:5).

Jesus taught: "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved. . . .

" . . . I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:9-10).

Later, Jesus explained to his Apostles, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

We come to the Father through the life-giving mission of the Son in two ways. In each of these ways, Jesus Christ is the life of the world, our Savior and our Redeemer.

Through the power and example of the infinite atonement of Jesus Christ, all mankind will be resurrected (see 2 Nephi 9:7, 12). Our mortal life came into being because of his creative act. Our immortal life has now been assured because the Resurrected Lord

has redeemed us from death. According to the plan of the Father, the Son was "the firstborn from the dead" (Colossians 1:18). "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

Jesus Christ is also the life of the world because he has atoned for the sins of the world. By yielding to temptation, Adam and Eve were "cut off from the presence of the Lord" (Helaman 14:16). In the scriptures this separation is called spiritual death (see Helaman 14:16, D&C 29:41).

The atonement of our Savior overcame this spiritual death. The scriptures say, "The Son of God hath atoned for original guilt" (Moses 6:54). As Paul taught the Saints in Rome: "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" (Romans 5:18). As a result of this atonement, "men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression" (Articles of Faith 1:2).

Our Savior has redeemed us from the sin of Adam, but what about the effects of our own sins? Since "all have sinned" (Romans 3:23), we are all spiritually dead. Again, our only hope for life is our Savior, who, the prophet Lehi taught, "offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law" (2 Nephi 2:7).

In order to lay claim upon our Savior's life-giving triumph over the spiritual death we suffer because of our own sins, we must follow the conditions he has prescribed. As he has told us in modern revelation, "I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent;

"But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I" (D&C 19:16-17).

Our third article of faith describes the Savior's conditions in these words: "We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel."

In the words of our Savior, recorded in the Book of Mormon as he taught the people on this continent, "And whosoever will hearken unto my words and repenteth and is baptized, the same shall be saved" (3 Nephi 23:5).

In summary, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Redeemer, is the *life* of the world because his resurrection and his atonement save us from both physical and spiritual death. Jacob rejoiced in this gift of life: "O how great the goodness of our God, who prepareth a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster; yea, that monster, death and hell, which I call the death of the body, and also the death of the spirit" (2 Nephi 9:10).

I wish that everyone could understand our belief and hear our testimony that Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Redeemer, is the light and life of the world.

Our Savior and our Redeemer

Some who profess to be followers of Christ insist that members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are not Christians. Indeed, there are those who make their living attacking our church and its doctrines. I wish all of them could have the experience I shared recently.

A friend who was making his first visit to Salt Lake City, called on me in my office. He is a well-educated man and a devout and sincere Christian. Although we have not discussed this with each other, we both know that some leaders of his denomination have taught that members of our church are not Christians.

After a short discussion on a matter of common interest, I told my friend I had something I would like him to see. We walked over to Temple Square and into the North Visitors' Center. We viewed the pictures of Bible and Book of Mormon Apostles and prophets. Then we turned our steps up the inclined walkway to the second level. Here Thorvaldsen's great statue of the

risen Christ dominates a setting suggestive of the immensity of space and the grandeur of the creations of God.

As we emerged and beheld this majestic likeness of the Christus, arms outstretched and hands showing the wounds of his crucifixion, my friend drew a sharp breath. We stood quietly for a few minutes, enjoying a reverent communion of worshipful thoughts about our Savior. Then, without further conversation, we made our way down to the street level. On the way we walked past the small diorama showing the Prophet Joseph Smith kneeling in the Sacred Grove.

As we left Temple Square and took our leave of one another, my friend took me by the hand. "Thank you for showing me that," he said. "Now I understand something about your faith that I have never understood before." I hope that every person who has ever had doubts about whether we are Christians can achieve that same understanding.

We love the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Messiah, our Savior and our Redeemer. His is the only name by which we can be saved (see Mosiah 3:17, 5:8; D&C 18:23). We seek to serve him. We belong to his church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Our missionaries and members testify of Jesus Christ in many nations of the world. As the prophet Nephi wrote in the Book of Mormon, "We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins" (2 Nephi 25:26).

As we state in our first article of faith, "We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost." God the Father, the great Elohim, the Almighty God, is the Father of our spirits, the framer of heaven and earth, and the author of the plan of our salvation (see Moses 1:31-33, 2:1-2;

D&C 20:17–21). Jesus Christ is his Only Begotten Son, Jehovah, the Holy One and God of Israel, the Messiah, “the God of the whole earth” (3 Nephi 11:14). As the Book of Mormon declares, “Salvation was, and is, and is to come, in and through the atoning blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent” (Mosiah 3:18; see also Moses 6:52, 59). The scriptures proclaim and we reverently affirm that Jesus Christ is the light and life of the world.

What does this knowledge mean to Latter-day Saints? (We call ourselves “Saints” because this is the scriptural term for those who have sought to make their lives holy by entering into covenants to follow Christ.)

Our Savior is the light of the world. We should live so that we can be enlightened by his Spirit, and so that we may hear and heed the ratifying seal of the Holy Ghost, which testifies of the Father and the Son (see D&C 20:26). We should study the principles of his gospel and receive its ordinances. We should keep his commandments, including his two great commandments to love God and to love and serve our neighbors (see Matthew 22:36–40). We should be faithful to the covenants we have made in the name of Jesus Christ.

Our Savior is also the *life* of the world. We should give thanks for his absolute gift of immortality. We should receive the ordinances and keep the covenants necessary to receive his con-

ditional gift of life eternal, the greatest of all the gifts of God (see D&C 14:7).

Come unto Christ

In short, Latter-day Saints invite each other and all men and women everywhere to “come unto Christ.” As a prophet has told us in the Book of Mormon: “I would that ye should come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. Yea, come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him, and continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth ye will be saved” (Omni 1:26).

May God bless all of us to come unto Christ. I testify that he is our Savior and our Redeemer, the light and the life of the world, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang “Truth Eternal” without announcement.

President Monson

Elder Dallin H. Oaks, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just addressed us, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing “Truth Eternal.”

President Benson has asked that I serve as concluding speaker at this session of our conference.

President Thomas S. Monson

We live in a wicked world

Recently there moved over the wires of Associated Press a catalog of crime as the daily happenings around the world were relayed to the media and thence to the homes on every continent.

The headlines were brief. They highlighted murder, rape, robbery, molestation, fraud, deceit, and corruption. I made note of several: “Man Slays

Wife and Children, Then Turns Gun on Self”; “Child Identifies Molester”; “Hundreds Lose All As Multimillion-Dollar Scam Is Exposed.” The sordid list continued. Shades of Sodom, glimpses of Gomorrah.

President Ezra Taft Benson has often stated, “We live in a wicked world.” The Apostle Paul warned, “Men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud,

blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:2-4).

"The doorway of love"

Must we suffer the same fate as those who lived in the cities of the plain? Can we not learn the lesson taught in the time of Noah? "Is there no balm in Gilead?" (Jeremiah 8:22). Or is there a doorway that leads us from the morass of worldliness onward and upward to the high ground of righteousness? There echoes ever so gently to the honest mind that personal invitation of the Lord: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him" (Revelation 3:20). Does that doorway have a name? It surely does. I have chosen to call it "the doorway of love."

Love is the catalyst that causes change. Love is the balm that brings healing to the soul. But love doesn't grow like weeds or fall like rain. Love has its price. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). That Son, even the Lord Jesus Christ, gave His life that we might have eternal life, so great was His love for His Father and for us.

This same Jesus was approached by a lawyer who asked, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?"

"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:36-40).

In that tender and touching farewell, as He counseled His beloved

disciples, Jesus taught: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me" (John 14:21). Particularly far-reaching was the instruction, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you" (John 13:34).

Love at home

Little children can learn the lesson of love. Profound instruction from holy writ oftentimes is not understood by them. However, they respond readily to a favorite verse:

*"I love you, Mother," said little John;
Then, forgetting his work, his cap went on,
And he was off to the garden swing,
And left her the water and wood to bring.*
*"I love you, Mother," said rosy Nell—
"I love you better than tongue can tell";
Then she teased and pouted full half the day,
Till her mother rejoiced when she went to play.*
*"I love you, Mother," said little Fan;
"Today I'll help you all I can;
How glad I am that school doesn't keep!"
So she rocked the babe till it fell asleep.*
*Then, stepping softly, she fetched the broom,
And swept the floor and tidied the room;
Busy and happy all day was she,
Helpful and happy as child could be.*
*"I love you, Mother," again they said,
Three little children going to bed;
How do you think that mother guessed
Which of them really loved her best?"*
(Joy Allison, in *The World's Best*)

Loved Poems, comp. James Gilchrist Lawson [New York: Harper and Row, 1955], pp. 243-44)

Home should be a haven of love. Honor, courtesy, and respect symbolize love and characterize the righteous family. Fathers in such homes will not hear the denunciation of the Lord as recorded in the book of Jacob: "Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives, and lost the confidence of your children, because of your bad examples before them; and the sobbings of their hearts ascend up to God against you" (Jacob 2:35).

Let peace on earth begin with me

In 3 Nephi the Master instructed: "There shall be no disputations among you. . . .

"For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another.

"Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away" (3 Nephi 11:28-30).

Where love is, there is no disputation. Where love is, there is no contention. Where love is, there God will be also. Each of us has the responsibility to keep His commandments. The lessons found in scripture find fulfillment in our lives. Joseph Smith taught that "happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], pp. 255-56).

In the classic musical production *Camelot*, there is a line with words of warning for all. After the familiar triangle began to deepen regarding King

Arthur, Lancelot, and Guenevere, King Arthur said, "We must not let our passions destroy our dreams."

From that same production came another truth also spoken by Arthur as he envisioned a better world: "Violence is not strength, and compassion is not weakness."

In this world in which we live, there is a tendency for us to describe needed change, required help, and desired relief with the familiar phrase, "They ought to do something about this." We fail to define the word *they*. I love the message, "Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me."

Tears came to my eyes when I read of a mere boy in one of our eastern cities who noticed a vagrant asleep on a sidewalk and who then went to his own bedroom, retrieved his own pillow, and placed it beneath the head of that one whom he knew not. Perhaps there came from the precious past the welcome words: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40).

I extol those who, with loving care and compassionate concern, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and house the homeless. He who notes the sparrow's fall will not be unmindful of such service.

*A bell is no bell till you ring it,
A song is no song till you sing it;
And love in your heart wasn't put
there to stay.*

*Love isn't love till you give it
away.*

("Sixteen Going on Seventeen,"
from *The Sound of Music*, Rodgers
and Hammerstein)

Lift, help, and give

From the Holy Bible we read: "And it came to pass . . . that [Jesus] went into a city called Nain. . . .

"When he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. . . .

"And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.

"And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still."

In the majesty of his messianic ministry, He declared: "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.

"And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother" (Luke 7:11-15).

The desire to lift, the willingness to help, and the graciousness to give come from a heart filled with love.

Show your love

The poet wrote, "Love is the most noble attribute of the human soul." And William Shakespeare cautioned, "They do not love that do not show their love" (*Two Gentlemen of Verona*, act 1, scene 2, line 31).

A school teacher showed her love with her guiding philosophy: "No one fails in my class. I have the responsibility to help each student succeed."

A priesthood quorum leader in Salt Lake City—a retired executive—said to me: "This year I have helped twelve of my brethren who were out of work to obtain permanent employment. I have never been happier in my entire life." Short in stature, "Little Ed," as we affectionately called him, stood tall that day as his eyes glistened and his voice quavered. He showed his love by helping those in need.

A large and tough businessman, a wholesale vendor of poultry, showed his love with a single comment made when one attempted to pay for twenty-four roasting chickens. "The chickens are going to the widows, aren't they? There will be no charge." As he placed them in the car trunk, he said in a faltering voice: "And there are more where these came from."

Robert Woodruff, an executive in a former generation, traversed America with a message which he delivered to civic and business groups. The outline was simple, the message brief:

The five most important words are these: *I am proud of you.*

The four most important words are these: *What is your opinion?*

The three most important words are these: *If you please.*

The two most important words are these: *Thank you.*

To Mr. Woodruff's list I would add, The single most important word is *love.*

A few years ago Morgan High School played Millard High for the state football championship. From his wheelchair, to which Morgan coach Jan Smith was confined, he said to his team: "This is the most important game of your lives. You lose and you will regret it forever. You win, and you will remember it forever. Make every play as though it were all-important."

Behind the door, his wife, whom he tenderly referred to as his chief assistant, overheard her husband say, "I love you guys. I don't care about the ball game. I love you and want the game victory for you." Underdog Morgan High won the football game and the state championship.

True love is a reflection of Christ's love. In December of each year we call it the Christmas spirit. You can hear it. You can see it. You can feel it. But never alone.

The wondrous gift of love

One winter day, I thought back to an experience from my boyhood. I was just eleven. Our Primary president, Melissa, was an older and loving gray-haired lady. One day at Primary, Melissa asked me to stay behind and visit with her. There the two of us sat in the otherwise-empty chapel. She placed her arm about my shoulder and began to cry.

Surprised, I asked her why she was crying.

She replied, "I don't seem to be able to encourage the Trail Builder boys to be reverent during the opening exercises of Primary. Would you be willing to help me, Tommy?"

I promised Melissa that I would. Strangely to me, but not to Melissa,

that ended any problem of reverence in that Primary. She had gone to the source of the problem—me. The solution was love.

The years flew by. Marvelous Melissa, now in her nineties, lived in a nursing facility in the northwest part of Salt Lake City. Just before Christmas I determined to visit my beloved Primary president. Over the car radio, I heard the song, "Hark! the herald angels sing; Glory to the newborn King!" (*Hymns* [1985], no. 209). I reflected on the visit made by wise men those long years ago. They brought gifts of gold, of frankincense, and of myrrh. I brought only the gift of love and a desire to say thank you.

I found Melissa in the lunchroom. She was staring at her plate of food, teasing it with the fork she held in her aged hand. Not a bite did she eat. As I spoke to her, my words were met by a benign but blank stare. I took the fork in hand and began to feed Melissa, talking all the time I did so about her service to boys and girls as a Primary worker. There wasn't so much as a glimmer of recognition, far less a spoken word. Two other residents of the nursing home gazed at me with puzzled expressions. At last they spoke, saying, "Don't talk to her. She doesn't know anyone—even her own family. She hasn't said a word in all the years she's been here."

Luncheon ended. My one-sided conversation wound down. I stood to leave. I held her frail hand in mine, gazed into her wrinkled but beautiful countenance, and said, "God bless you, Melissa. Merry Christmas."

Without warning, she spoke the words, "I know you. You're Tommy Monson, my Primary boy. How I love you." She pressed my hand to her lips and bestowed on it the kiss of love. Tears coursed down her cheeks and bathed our clasped hands. Those

hands, that day, were hallowed by heaven and graced by God. The herald angels did sing. The words of the Master seemed to have a personal meaning never before fully felt: "Woman, behold thy son!" And to his disciple, "Behold thy mother!" (see John 19:26–27).

Outside the sky was blue—azure blue. The air was cool—crispy cool. The snow was white—crystal white.

From Bethlehem there seemed to echo the words:

*How silently, how silently
The wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of his heav'n.
No ear may hear his coming;
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive
him, still
The dear Christ enters in.
("O Little Town of Bethlehem,"
Hymns [1985], no. 208)*

The wondrous gift was given, the heavenly blessing was received, the dear Christ had entered in—all through the doorway called love. I declare this solemn truth in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

The Tabernacle Choir will sing in closing "Each Life That Touches Ours for Good." The benediction will be offered by Bishop Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, and this conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

The choir sang "Each Life That Touches Ours for Good."

Bishop Henry B. Eyring offered the benediction.

SECOND DAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 157th Semiannual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, October 4, 1987. President Ezra Taft Benson presided, and President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir, with Brothers Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger conducting and Brother John Longhurst at the organ.

President Hinckley made the following remarks at the outset of the meeting.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

President Ezra Taft Benson, who has presided at all sessions of this conference, has asked that I conduct this fifth and concluding session of the 157th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend a sincere welcome to all assembled in the Tabernacle and to those seated in the Assembly Hall, where Elders Robert B. Harbertson and Hans B. Ringger are seated on the stand. We send also our greetings and

blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or by means of satellite transmission.

The Tabernacle Choir, with Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger directing and John Longhurst at the organ, will begin this service by singing "Rejoice, A Glorious Sound Is Heard." The invocation will be offered by Elder John H. Groberg of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Rejoice, A Glorious Sound Is Heard."

Elder John H. Groberg offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will now sing "Our Savior's Love." Following the singing, Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker.

The choir sang "Our Savior's Love."

Elder L. Tom Perry

Purposes of celebrations

We have just completed a summer in which we have commemorated several events of great historical significance. On the twenty-fourth of July, we celebrated the 140th anniversary of the arrival of the Mormon pioneers in the Salt Lake Valley. At the same time we were commemorating the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the first LDS missionaries in Great Britain. Finally, citizens of these great United States,

members of the Church and non-members alike, recently celebrated the 200th birthday of their Constitution.

Each of these events has had a marked and lasting impact on the history of the Church. As I participated in many of the festivities dotting this historic summer, I pondered the purpose of celebrations.

Celebrating events of the past focuses our thoughts on our history. We take the opportunity to review the past. We glean from the experiences of the

past as we anticipate the future. Cicero wrote this of history:

"Not to know what has been transacted in former times is to be always a child. If no use is made of the labors of past ages, the world must remain always in the infancy of knowledge" (in *The International Dictionary of Thoughts*, comp. John P. Bradley, et. al. [Chicago: J. G. Ferguson Publishing Co., 1969], p. 362).

Ancient Israel's celebrations

This summer has rekindled in me an interest in our heritage and history. I have been intrigued by the similarities found there and am especially fascinated with the parallelism between the Hebrew nation and our own Church history.

The man prepared by our Heavenly Father to be the leader of the Hebrew nation was Moses. His illustrious name adorns the pages of ancient history. The Lord revealed through Moses the feasts and events that the Israelites should hold as perpetual reminders of their deliverance from slavery and the birth of their new nation. These celebrations took two forms. First they were celebrations of the actual historical events, such as the Passover, to remind the people of Israel of the Lord's hand in delivering them. Then there were traditions tied to periods of time determined by various multiples of the number seven.

Of course, the seventh day was the Sabbath, a day of rest, the seventh month a time of harvest. Then, as we read in the twenty-fifth chapter of Leviticus, there were special instructions pertaining to the seventh year and the fiftieth year:

"Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof;

"But in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the Lord: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard. . . .

"And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven

times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years.

"Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubile to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land.

"And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family" (Leviticus 25:3-4, 8-10).

Every fiftieth year, the land was to be returned to the original owners or their descendants; all Israelites sold into slavery for debt were to be freed; and the land, as in the seventh or sabbatical year, was to lie fallow. Even in our day, the tradition of sabbatical years is perpetuated by universities, which encourage faculty members to go on sabbaticals, roughly every seventh year. The word *jubilee*, generally interpreted, means "ram" or "ram's horn" and refers to the horn used to proclaim the beginning of the Jubilee Year, or the fiftieth year.

There seem to be four purposes for celebrations and traditions of ancient Israel, each of which could be applied as a guide and an influence to the way we celebrate and the meanings we give to our celebrations.

Traditions that strengthen faith

First, the traditions preserved the religious faith and strengthened the spiritual fiber of the people of Israel. As an example, let us review the messages implicit in the celebration of the Jubilee Year. An excerpt from *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* tells us that "the fiftieth year was to be a time of proclaiming liberty to all the inhabitants of the land. God had redeemed His people from bondage in Egypt (Lev. 25:42); and none of them was again to be reduced to the status of . . . slave. . . . God's chosen child

was not to be oppressed. . . . Indeed, as citizens of the theocratic kingdom, masters and servants had become brothers together. . . . Thus, as seen in its widest application, only through its loyalty to God could Israel as a nation ever hope to be free and independent of other masters.

"A second feature of the Jubilee was that of the restitution of all real property. The purpose was to demonstrate that the earth is subject basically to God's law, and not to man's desires. . . . God's specific legislation concerned the inalienability of Israel's land titles. It required the reversion of all hereditary property to the family that originally possessed it and the reestablishment of the initial arrangement regarding God's division of the land. It did not teach either the socialistic economic theory that a person is entitled to ownership of goods on the basis of his need . . . or the free-enterprise system that allows an unlimited expansion of private property. On the contrary, it established a fixed title to the property assigned by God" (Geoffrey W. Bromley, ed., 4 vols. [Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968], 2:1142).

What powerful messages these are—that the Israelites were God's chosen children, and that all they possessed was God's, and that only He could permanently grant title to the land. Truly, these messages, couched in the tradition of the Jubilee Year, reminded the people of Israel of their spiritual genealogy and their indebtedness to the Lord.

Celebrations of Christmas and Easter, our annual Pioneer Day observance, events commemorating the restoration of the Aaronic and the Melchizedek priesthoods, the Relief Society birthday parties, and pageants—all cause us to remember our spiritual heritage and increase our gratitude to the Lord for all He does for us.

Political component of traditions

Second, Israel's celebrations and traditions had a political component.

These were times of uniting the tribes to form a closer union.

Celebrations that commemorate important events in our native lands should receive our support and attention. I was impressed with how vigorously and appropriately members of the Church residing in the United States celebrated the 200th year of the Constitution.

After all, we declare in the twelfth article of faith, "We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law." We find that this counsel is continually needed in the Church today. All members of the Church should be committed to obeying and honoring the laws of the land in which they live. We should be exemplary in our obedience to the governments that govern us. The Church, to be of service to the nations of the world, must be a wholesome influence in the lives of individuals who embrace it, in temporal as well as spiritual affairs.

In Matthew, the twenty-second chapter, we recall the account of the Pharisees attempting to entangle the Savior in the conflict they perceived in His teachings between Church and state:

"Tell us therefore, what thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?"

"But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?"

"Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny."

"And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription?"

"They said unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:17-21).

Continuing after the Savior's ministry, the Apostles urged the Saints to be orderly and law-abiding. Writing to Titus, Paul declared, "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work" (Titus 3:1).

As Church members, we live under the banner of many different flags. How important it is that we understand our place and our position in the lands in which we live! We should be familiar with the history, heritage, and laws of the lands that govern us. In those countries that allow us the right to participate in the affairs of government, we should use our free agency and be actively engaged in supporting and defending the principles of truth, right, and freedom.

Cultural impact of traditions

Third, Israel's celebrations and traditions had a cultural impact. Their festivals and feasts were times of sharing talents and accomplishments. They were a time of sharing practical knowledge associated with advancements in the arts and sciences.

An important part of our pioneer heritage is an appreciation of all the cultural arts. Our pioneer forebears literally danced and sang their way across the plains. It was a way they kept their spirits high in the face of tremendous hardships.

As the pioneers settled communities, they built theaters, organized bands and choruses, and sent artists on missions to gain the experience and training necessary to develop their talents fully. Certainly, we honor our pioneer heritage by making beauty and culture one of the centerpieces of our commemorations. And by so doing, are we not also offering praise to the Lord through the beautiful creations of our hands and our minds?

Social significance of traditions

Finally, the celebrations and traditions of ancient Israel had a deep social significance. They were times of building a sense of community, a time of reaffirming a brotherhood and sisterhood shared by everyone, a time of bonding families together.

In the general conference of 1880, President John Taylor announced a

Jubilee Year of the Church. He proposed to the body of the Church several ways to celebrate the Jubilee Year—ways that drew the community of Saints more closely together. President Taylor said:

"It occurred to me that we ought to do something, as they did in former times, to relieve those that are oppressed with debt, to assist those that are needy, to break the yoke off those that may feel themselves crowded upon, and to make it a time of general rejoicing" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1880, p. 61).

President Taylor then proposed that—

First, one-half of the debt of the members to the Perpetual Emigration Fund would be released.

Second, the poor would be released from the back tithing they had committed for.

Third, the Church would raise a herd of a thousand milk cows, to be distributed to the poor and needy. The Church would contribute three hundred cows, and the rest would be gathered from the stakes of the Church.

And finally, the Relief Society would gather bushels of wheat to be loaned to the poor to be used as seed. Then, after the harvest, the loan could be repaid, thus establishing a permanent store of seed wheat. (Someone asked President Taylor if the wheat was to be loaned without interest. He replied, "Of course it is; we do not want any nonsense of that kind; it is the time of jubilee") (in Conference Report, Apr. 1880, p. 64; see also pp. 62–63).

What a marvelous effect President Taylor's proposal must have had on the Church's social structure! By recasting the traditions of ancient Israel in a way to respond to present-day needs, President Taylor showed the members how to be true Latter-day Saints.

Praise God through celebrations

Celebrating important historical events perpetuates traditions, but it does not replace the study of history.

Rather, it encourages study. We build bridges between the present and the past and bring relevance and interest to our study of history. When we celebrate, we remember. Sometimes we reenact that which has gone on before. When we honor tradition, we actually do what our ancestors did.

I hope as we continue to commemorate historical events and reclaim our traditions that we always celebrate with a purpose. I pray that we will make our celebrations more meaningful by reaffirming our spiritual, political, cultural, and social values. As members of this glorious church, we share a rich heritage. We literally stand on the shoulders of the giants of faith, vision, and spirit who preceded us.

When we honor them and their many sacrifices, we preserve their achievements and the principles and values for which they stood. And it provides us a wonderful way in which to praise God!

We learn from ancient Israel that there is a place for commemorative events. Let us build in our families,

communities, and nations, traditions of a lasting nature that will consistently remind us of the Lord's eternal truths and of our forebears who preserved them for our day.

God grant that we may ever keep alive the rich heritage which is ours, especially by building family traditions as constant reminders of our standards and our values.

This is the Lord's work in which we are engaged. I bear witness of that. He lives. Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world. That we may be engaged in His work is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder L. Aldin Porter, who was sustained at the April conference as a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

Elder L. Aldin Porter

The Brethren will never lead us astray

Shortly after this call came to me, I was traveling by plane from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to Salt Lake City. A young businessman stepped to my seat in the plane and introduced himself as a Latter-day Saint. He asked if I was traveling to attend meetings, and I answered, "Yes."

"Will you see President Benson?"

"I think that is unlikely in view of the nature of the meetings."

"When you see him, will you tell him that though we have never met, I have a deep love for him?"

He returned to his seat.

It was late in the day; soon the lights were dimmed, giving me ample opportunity to think about that experience.

Brothers and sisters, there is great safety in having a love for the Brethren. As we traveled through the night, I remembered an experience that had come to me in this tabernacle some years ago. It was, I believe, the last time that President Joseph Fielding Smith spoke in a general priesthood meeting. He said:

"Now, brethren, I think there is one thing which we should have exceedingly clear in our minds. Neither the President of the Church, nor the First Presidency, nor the united voice of the First Presidency and the Twelve will ever lead the Saints astray or send forth counsel to the world that is contrary to the mind and will of the Lord" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1972, p. 99; or *Ensign*, July 1972, p. 88).

When President Smith made that statement, the Spirit bore witness to me that it was true. That same Spirit bears witness anew today.

President Spencer W. Kimball told the experience of a man who "rebelled against the call of Brigham Young to go to southern valleys, saying: 'Nobody is going to tell me where to go and what to do.' Through his personal rebellion, he took his entire family out of the Church. How little he retarded the colonization program! The valleys were settled in spite of him. How little his disaffection injured the Church! It has grown steadily without him. But how *he* has suffered in *his* eternal progression! In contrast, there were many who pulled up stakes, moved to new worlds, and reared families of faith and devotion" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1955, p. 94).

What can we do to help develop a love for the prophets, seers, and revelators? Permit me to make three suggestions.

Read the scriptures

First, read the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon. Speaking of the scriptures, the Prophet Joseph Smith said, "He who reads it oftenest will like it best, and he who is acquainted with it, will know the hand wherever he can see it" (*History of the Church*, 2:14).

Let us read the scriptures, and we "will know the hand."

The same spirit that is felt while we read the word of the Lord in the scriptures accompanies the pronouncements of the Lord's prophets. As we learn to love the word of the Lord as written in the scriptures, we will love the word of the Lord as given through his prophets.

Obeys the prophets

Second, let us do as the prophets request. Note the words of the Savior:

"And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?"

"Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:15-17).

President Benson, in April Conference, 1986, said, "The Book of Mormon has not been, nor is it yet, the center of our personal study, family teaching, preaching, and missionary work. Of this we must repent" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1986, p. 4; or *Ensign*, May 1986, pp. 5-6).

Brothers and sisters, let us do as the prophet asks, and in a little time we will know that he speaks the word of the Lord.

Pray for the prophets

Third, pray for them. Call down the blessings of heaven upon the heads of the prophets, seers, and revelators. Know that the Lord responds to the sustaining prayers of the Saints. In addition, as our hearts go out to the Brethren in sincere prayer, our hearts will be filled with love for them.

Love and follow the Brethren

There is safety in loving the Brethren. What kind of safety? The Master concluded the Sermon on the Mount as recorded in both Matthew and 3 Nephi with the following statement:

"Whoso heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock—

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.

"And every one that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand—

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it" (3 Nephi 14:24-27).

Did you note, brothers and sisters, that the rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew upon *both* houses? Just because we follow the word of the Lord does not mean we will suffer no ill winds; it does mean that we will spiritually survive them!

The prophet Mormon counseled us in great power on the subject of prophets when he said, "Wo unto him that shall deny the revelations of the Lord, and that shall say the Lord no longer worketh by revelation, or by prophecy, or by gifts, or by tongues, or by healings, or by the power of the Holy Ghost!" (3 Nephi 29:6).

Priesthood leaders, do you want to raise the spiritual level of your stewardship? Follow the Brethren.

Husbands, do you want your wives to have more confidence in you and your leadership? Follow the Brethren.

Parents, do you want your children to feel your love and more

willingly accept your direction? Love the Brethren.

We have in this conference heard what the Lord would have us know. What has been said and what will yet be said should be studied and pondered and prayed over and followed. Leave no question in anyone's mind where you stand. Declare in quiet tones that you love the Brethren and that you are going to follow them. Add exclamation marks to your words as you quietly and faithfully follow the Brethren.

You will find that you will "enjoy the words of eternal life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come" (Moses 6:59). I am a witness that this is the work of God. There is a prophet in our midst, even President Ezra Taft Benson, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder L. Aldin Porter of the First Quorum of the Seventy has just addressed us.

It will now be our privilege to listen to Elder William R. Bradford, also a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

Elder William R. Bradford

Some things are interesting; other things are important

The young people of a certain ward had worked to earn the large sum of money needed to go on an adventure trip.

I had had some acquaintance with their bishop. He called and asked if I would help him get some news publicity so these young people would be recognized for the fine things they were doing.

I said I would not help him. He was surprised and asked why. I answered that although it was commendable that the young people had worked hard to earn this money, some things are interesting while other things are

important, and that there may be a higher purpose for the funds they had obtained from all the energy they had expended.

He was even more surprised and asked what I meant. I explained that my ministry takes me into countries where the people are less privileged than where he lives. I know of their challenges and sacrifices. I told him of the struggles of young people in those areas to obtain the needed funds to support themselves on missions. For the family to have enough food is often a challenge. Clothing is shared and worn out. Fashion is whatever is available, and in many cases that is not much. I explained that the amount of money these

fine young people had earned would keep several of these missionaries in the field for their entire missions. We talked about the relative value of an adventure trip as compared to that of missionary service.

He said, "Are you asking me to have these young people donate these funds to the general missionary fund of the Church?" I said, "No, I have not asked you to do that. I have just said that there are finer things to do." I explained that I was not against the kind of project they were planning, but there must be a balance, and, by comparison, some things are interesting and enticing while other things are important.

A higher law of recognition

Later, the bishop said he had talked to the young people and they had caught the vision and spirit of our previous conversation. They wanted to sacrifice their adventure trip and donate all the money to the general missionary fund. They asked if they could come and bring the check and have their picture taken with me as they made the donation, and could they have the picture and an article put into the news?

I surprised him again. I said no. Then I said, "You might consider helping your young people learn a higher law of recognition. Recognition from on high is silent. It is carefully and quietly recorded there. Let them feel the joy and gain the treasure in their heart and soul that come from silent, selfless service."

They did this, and now, as a reward, each has a memory and a pride which they recognize as one of the finer and more important things that they have ever done.

The nature of selfless service

In a refugee camp in Bataan, Philippines, I watched as one of our lovely lady missionaries sat down on the dirty floor beside an old woman who was weeping and confused and afraid. She gently pulled this woman's head over

onto her shoulder and smoothed her hair with one hand as she put her other arm around her to comfort her.

I learned that this woman had been driven from her home. Some of her family members had been killed. She had been abused and driven through the forests and jungles and finally out of her own country. She could not even speak the language of her present benefactors.

Later, as we talked of the work she was doing, the lady missionary said, with tears running down her face, "This is the finest thing I have ever done." Many things are only interesting and enticing, while other things are important.

Sometimes, because of the pressures of the world around us, our service projects become *self* service projects rather than *selfless* service projects.

Selfless service projects are the projects of the gospel. They have continuity. They are not one-time special events based on entertainment and fun and games. They need not be regimented nor regulated. Selfless service projects are people-to-people projects. They are face-to-face, eye-to-eye, voice-to-ear, heart-to-heart, spirit-to-spirit, and hand-in-hand, people-to-people projects.

The desire to be recognized

We must remember that we are social beings. Our eternal destiny is welded to the destiny of our fellows. Within this social system, there is always a desire for recognition, and this is as it should be, if that desire is kept within its bounds.

Elder Marvin J. Ashton once related that during a meeting a woman seated behind him passed him a note. It simply said, "Would you please turn around and look at me?" Then he said, "Everyone needs to be looked at."

Within each of us there is an intense need to feel that we belong. This feeling of unity and togetherness comes through the warmth of a smile, a hand-

shake, or a hug, through laughter and unspoken demonstrations of love. It comes in the quiet, reverent moments of soft conversation, and in listening. It comes from a still, small voice reminding us that we are brothers and sisters, the children of a Heavenly Father.

Dangers of the praise of men

To get recognition and the praise of men can become an obsessive goal in one's life. It can lead from one act to another until life is filled with egotism and selfishness. The momentary pleasure that recognition and the praise of men bring almost always causes people to want more. If they can't get it in one way, they will try another. If it can't be obtained by being one's natural self, they will try to get it acting out a life that is unnatural. The longing to be popular, to be praised by one's peers, and to receive the recognition of men is a very powerful force.

It is vain to seek the praise or recognition of men. This vanity comes of evil because it springs forth out of selfishness. Christ clearly taught this as he spoke of those who "set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion."

"Behold, the Lord hath forbidden this thing; wherefore, the Lord God hath given a commandment that all men should have charity, which charity is love. And except they should have charity they were nothing. Wherefore, if they should have charity they would not suffer the laborer in Zion to perish."

"But the laborer in Zion shall labor for Zion" (2 Nephi 26:29-31).

Selfless service sanctifies

Selflessness is righteousness. It embraces the true spirit of companionship. It is the very essence of friendship. It is the portrayer of true love and oneness in humanity. Its reward is the freeing of the soul, a nearness to divinity, a worthiness for the companionship

of the Spirit. Every requirement that God's plan for our salvation places upon us is based on the giving of one's self.

The only way under the heavens whereby a person can be sanctified is in selfless service.

Selfishness

Where the proper focus on gospel-centered, selfless service is not developed, selfishness takes over. Of all influences that cause men to choose wrong, selfishness is undoubtedly the strongest. Where it is, the Spirit is not. Talents go unshared, the needs of the poor unrequited, the weak unstrengthened, the ignorant untaught, and the lost unrecovered.

Selfishness, viewed in its true sense, is the absence of empathy and compassion, the abandonment of brotherhood, the rejection of God's plan, the isolation of one's soul.

Guidelines for setting priorities

As I have said, many things, in fact most, are interesting, and many are enticing. But some things are important. The limits of time dictate that we must prioritize what we do. The divinely given and heaven-protected gift of agency allows us to determine to what degree we will serve others and allow them to serve us. The depth of involvement in that which is important, rather than just interesting, is our own choice.

As we make these choices, we might consider that the glitter and excitement of festive, fun-filled projects are interesting, but the shut-ins, the lonely, the handicapped, the homeless, the latchkey kids, and the abandoned aged are important.

Worldly magazines, tabloids, and much of the multi-mass media mess of fast-track information we are receiving is interesting and enticing, but the scriptures are important.

The RVs and the TVs and retirement ease make it interesting to wander and play, but people's needs for selfless deeds are important. There is concern that "wander and play" have replaced "ponder and pray."

A focus on fashion and getting and spending and the accumulation of things for our enjoyment and comfort is interesting and enticing, but a focus on devoting one's means and time and one's very self to the cause of proclaiming the gospel is important.

The meetings and materials and planning are all interesting, but the doing is important.

Come unto Christ through service

With the constant exhortation to come unto Christ is the promise that we can be perfected in him. If we do all that we can do by loving and serving God with all of our might, mind, and strength, then is his grace sufficient for us. By his grace, after all that we can do, we may become perfect in Christ.

Shall we not then strive for the recognition of that Almighty God who is our Father, through our selfless service?

"And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

"Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:34-37).

In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder William R. Bradford has just spoken to us, and Elder Lynn A. Sorenson of the First Quorum of the Seventy will now speak to us.

Elder Lynn A. Sorenson

Memory of conference

I can remember as if it were yesterday the first time that I attended general conference. I was just a young boy, and my wonderful parents brought me to the Tabernacle so that I could have a special, spiritual experience early in my life. We sat in the balcony here at the left of the podium, where I could look down directly at the General Authorities.

It was a great thrill for me to see President Heber J. Grant for the first time. I particularly remember how President Grant joined in the congregational singing with such fervor and how uncomfortable the hard, wooden benches seemed to me even at that young age. I remember looking at the upholstered, individual seats occupied by the Tabernacle Choir and deciding that someday I would sing in the choir and have a comfortable, reserved seat for

conference. Well, somehow the lines of communication got mixed up. This was not what I had in mind at all.

The Lord prepares a way

I have been so humbled by this unexpected calling, and I do not have the vocabulary to express how I felt when President Thomas S. Monson issued my call. Certainly the words of Nephi took on a significance for me that I had never before felt:

"I, Nephi, said unto my father: I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them" (1 Nephi 3:7).

I feel that scripture has great significance for everyone in the Church, no

matter what his calling might be. Experience has taught me that the Lord does prepare the way if we are diligent and faithful in doing our part.

The wisdom of Elder Russell M. Nelson has also been helpful, for he taught that we are not called to positions of leadership for what we are but for what we may become. I have a lot of "becoming" to do to be able to serve the Lord as he would have me do.

I pledged to the Lord the day that I was sustained that I would serve him with all my heart, might, mind, and strength; I reaffirm this now to the First Presidency, my Brethren, and all of you. Whatever is needed in this sacred service, I will be willing to do. But I need your faith and prayers, and I hope that I may always be worthy of them.

Expression of gratitude

I want to publicly express my love and heartfelt gratitude to my wonderful wife, the mother of our nine children, who has been at my side for almost forty-five years. She has been such a source of strength and has always sustained me in my Church callings, even though her load has been very heavy with her own callings and the responsibility of motherhood and the home.

I feel great appreciation for the wholehearted support which I have always had from my parents and extended family. To my own dear children, their wives and husbands, and our twenty-seven (as of 8:25 this morning) beautiful grandchildren, I express my love and appreciation for their tremendous support, for their faith and prayers in our behalf, and for all the joy and happiness that they have brought into our lives.

I am grateful for my assignment in the Brazil Area Presidency with Elder Gibbons and Elder Camargo and the opportunity to serve once again with the warm, wonderful people of Brazil. I have been especially blessed in being involved in various ways in the growth of the Church there over the last forty-

eight years and have seen that growth go from fewer than 200 members in 1940 to more than 250,000 members today.

The Lord blesses the faithful

As we attend the various stake conferences, it is thrilling to meet the young leaders whom the Lord has raised up—men such as President Eraldo dos Santos. He embraced the gospel as a young boy of seventeen. When he elected to accept a mission call, he was disowned by his family and put out on the street with his meager belongings. He served faithfully, however, and later was led to a beautiful young convert girl. They were sealed in the temple and are rearing their family under the covenant. Still under thirty years of age, he is successful in his business and is a great leader in the stake. How the Lord blesses the faithful members of the Church!

Love for the gospel

Sister Sorensen and I recently had the opportunity to tour the new Fortaleza Mission. It took us back to our own missionary experiences. During his presidency, a mission president receives hundreds of weekly letters from his missionaries concerning many different subjects. Most of those I received were very spiritual, expressing the missionary's gratitude for the opportunity to serve the Lord and his testimony of the importance and truthfulness of the work. I have saved most of them. They are precious to me. One touched my heart profoundly. Elder Costa, a native Brazilian missionary, wrote in his last letter to me before we left the mission field:

"President, perhaps with the passing of time, I will forget your appearance or how you walked or things like that, but your love for the gospel and your testimony I will never forget."

If I am to be remembered at all by the membership of the Church, I hope

it will be in this manner, for I do have a great love for the gospel and for all the members of the Church everywhere. I do not feel at ease sitting in these red, upholstered chairs, but I have a sincere, burning testimony of this work. May the Lord bless me that I may touch the lives of those he loves throughout the Church. May I be guided and directed by him always, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Lynn A. Sorensen of the First Quorum of the Seventy has spoken to us. The choir and congregation will now join in singing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet," following which Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Elder M. Russell Ballard

This has been a wonderful conference, brothers and sisters. I pray that my few remarks will not detract from the spirit we have enjoyed.

Becoming self-sufficient requires sacrifice

During this past year, the Area Presidencies in South America became concerned with the dependency of the Church there upon financial resources from Church headquarters. Wisely, these Brethren could see that future needs would require more funds than Church headquarters could provide.

The Area Presidencies met with their Regional Representatives and stake presidents to counsel together on steps that would help the Church in South America become more self-sufficient. They studied ways to decrease costs and, at the same time, increase the participation of their people.

They agreed that greatly simplified buildings would fully meet the needs of the Church. They found ways for their members to donate more labor, decreasing the amount of cash required for construction. In seeking to become more self-sufficient, the people have incorporated the principle of sacrifice into their lives and have increased their faith.

The Prophet Joseph Smith said:

"A religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation; for, from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things" (*Lectures on Faith*, 6:7).

Blessings of becoming self-reliant

As the Saints work to become completely self-sufficient, something very special happens that goes far beyond decreasing costs. For example, when the Church leaders in South America turned their attention to decreasing the cost of missionary service, the Lord blessed them with a simple but marvelous idea: the members could provide the noon meal each day for the full-time missionaries. This was a task the Saints in South America could do, and one that would strengthen both the members and missionaries. It proved to be the means for the members in this part of the world to perfect the Saints and to proclaim the gospel—two parts of the mission of the Church.

Reporting on the results of putting this idea into action, one stake president said:

"I had a meeting with the mission president, and we discussed the idea that our members could provide the

noon meal for the missionaries. I asked my bishops for time in their sacrament meetings to explain the basic idea. I explained the blessings that they, their children, their neighborhood, and the stake would receive.

"In my own ward, we saw an unexpected result of our members' sacrifice. Attendance at sacrament meetings climbed from eighty to ninety people a week to nearly one hundred fifty now. The number of baptisms has increased from one or two a month to nearly twelve a month. General activity has increased in our stake, and we feel a sweeter spirit in every ward.

"My bishop told of an experience two young children had who are members of the Church but whose parents are not. These children raised their hands in support of the program, and then went home to tell their parents that they had incurred an obligation to feed the missionaries. As a result, the parents are now hearing the missionary discussions and attending Church meetings. We expect them to be baptized very soon."

One bishop reported to his stake president that he did not have enough active members to provide lunch for the missionaries every day. The wise stake president suggested that the bishop invite less-active members of the ward to participate. Much to the surprise of the bishop, many of the less-active members were pleased to have the missionaries come to their homes for a noon meal. In fact, many of these less-active members were anxious to share with the missionaries the stories of their conversions. More often than not, they would get out photographs of the missionaries who baptized them. This simple idea is bringing many unexpected blessings to the Church.

As the members share their food with the missionaries, the missionaries bring into homes the special spirit that only they carry, blessing both the members and the missionaries. Many less-active members are returning to full fellowship, and many more members are becoming involved in missionary

work because of this simple expression of love and service. How often, brothers and sisters, we can solve seemingly large problems through relatively simple means!

Let me share a few experiences that have resulted from members and missionaries working together. An elder wrote:

"Because we were able to have lunch with an inactive family, they are now back into full activity in the Church. When we ate with them, they recognized the importance of prayer before each meal. A wonderful spirit prevails in their home now. They are not only active again, but we baptized a member of the family and later baptized their neighbors as well—all because they invited us to share their food."

Another missionary wrote:

"The mother of a poor family came to me and my companion and asked us when we were going to eat at her home. Knowing of the family's humble circumstances, I talked to the branch president. He said, 'Elders, this family has taught us a lot by their example of humility. It is a great privilege to have them in our branch. They are poor, but they really want to participate. We want you to go. If their food isn't enough, come by my house afterwards and eat with us.'"

In Bolivia, a young mother with four small children expressed her testimony, saying:

"I am so grateful for the privilege of having the missionaries come into our home. It is a pleasure to feed them, even though I fear that sometimes we do not have enough for them." (I need to add here that members everywhere in the world have the same fear.) She continues: "However, I am so thankful for this opportunity, for, you see, my four little ones wait anxiously for the day to come when the missionaries eat with us. When it is our turn, two handsome young men dressed in white shirts, wearing ties, their hair cut neatly, come into our home. They are full of the gospel light. They play with the

children. They tell us about their wonderful missionary experiences. They are gentlemen, courteous and kind. After about an hour with us, they leave to do the work of the Lord."

What parents would not rejoice to have sons like the two missionaries for whom an older widow volunteered to provide lunch. After a few visits, they stopped on the way to her home and bought a bouquet of flowers to give to her as a token of thanks for the lunches. When they gave the flowers to her, the sister looked shocked and then began to cry. The elders thought they had done something wrong and began to apologize. The widow stopped them and said that no one had ever given her flowers during her entire life, not even her husband when he was alive. She beamed with delight during the lunch and then asked the elders to wait one more minute. She presented them with the name and address of one of her best friends and asked them to please teach the friend's family. The family accepted the gospel wholeheartedly and proved to be the best family baptism those two missionaries had.

Perhaps these words of one of our faithful mission presidents sum it all up:

"The self-sufficiency effort has been a blessing to our mission, not only because we have decreased the average missionary cost by forty-eight dollars per month, but because of the relationships our elders and sisters have been able to develop with the members and nonmembers. Many experiences have lead to member reactivations and to nonmember baptisms. The members are fed spiritually and have greater love for the missionaries. Up to this point, not one single problem has developed."

The president continues, "I have wondered if Alma's experience is any different from what we see happening between the Peruvian Saints and the missionaries."

From Alma, we read:

"And as [Alma] entered the city he was an hungered, and he said to a man:

Will ye give to an humble servant of God something to eat?"

"And the man said unto him: I am a Nephite, and I know that thou art a holy prophet of God, for thou art the man whom an angel said in a vision: Thou shalt receive. Therefore, go with me into my house and I will impart unto thee of my food; and I know that thou wilt be a blessing unto me and my house.

"And it came to pass that the man received him into his house; and the man was called Amulek; and he brought forth bread and meat and set before Alma" (Alma 8:19-21).

Something special happens to an individual or to a Church unit when the people become more independent and self-reliant. They feel more confident, positive, and assured, and they reflect these feelings in their actions.

Saints in Peru assist each other

Last March, as you remember, devastating rock and mud slides engulfed six small towns in the mountains east of Lima, Peru. All of these towns were within the Lima Peru San Luis Stake. The slide left 25,000 people homeless. Eighteen LDS families lost their homes completely, and 198 other families were left in dire need of food, clothing, and medical supplies.

The day after the slides, one member of the stake presidency and two other Church members waded through waist-high mud and debris for five kilometers to assess the damage. They found that more than three hundred people, members and nonmembers, had taken refuge in the Chosica chapel.

The following day, the stake presidency called a meeting of their eleven bishops and branch presidents. They made many assignments to furnish needed supplies. They asked each ward and branch to furnish work teams to go to the homes of members and help them clean up.

The stake presidency resolved to handle the problem without seeking

help from outside stakes. They soon found that they could not handle it all alone. They went to their Regional Representative and asked him to coordinate economic help from other stakes in the region. The Saints of Peru rallied together.

As an example, the Iquitos stake sent thirteen crates of clothing, each weighing thirty kilos (about sixty-six pounds). Other stakes and wards donated food, bedding, and mattresses.

Selling quilts and refreshments, young women raised more than three hundred dollars. One young priest, a senior at his high school in Lima, led a group of twenty-eight of his classmates, all nonmembers, to Chosica to help with the cleanup.

The stake Relief Society presidency visited the area frequently and instructed the sisters in classes on hygiene, sanitation, nutrition, and "how to organize family living in a tent."

The stakes did not intend to seek assistance from the general welfare funds of the Church. Stake leaders called in all fast-offering reserves from their wards and branches. They asked stake members to participate in a special fast on 29 March 1987 to raise funds that would help cover the expenses.

Some bore tender testimonies. Let me share just two. Sister Guadalupe, a nonmember, lost everything. Then in the shelter of a little room in our chapel, she gave birth to a baby boy. She stated that the Lord had helped her escape. She learned that everything of the world is temporary and can be lost. She thanked the branch and the Church for opening its doors to her and for the assistance she received.

Sister Leonora de Contreras, a Relief Society president, said she knew the gospel was true. She expressed thanks for her husband, who holds the priesthood and is a pillar of strength. The catastrophe destroyed the fruits of their lifetime of labor in less than thirty minutes. She recalled the words of their son who is serving in the Peru Trujillo Mission. As he left home, he said to her, "Mami, whatever happens,

if you need help, ask the Lord, and stay close to the Brethren." She expressed appreciation to stake leaders for their assistance.

Gratitude for sacrifices

Brothers and sisters, I realize that similar reports could come from other parts of the world. The principles of sacrifice, self-reliance, and pure love in action apply the same everywhere. I refer to South America only because my present assignment takes me there and gives me firsthand experience in that land. We have a long way to go in South America to become fully self-sufficient, but we are on the way, and the Lord is blessing our efforts.

I am so grateful to the Lord for the leaders and other members in the Church, both men and women, who are filled with a faith that makes them willing to sacrifice for the building up of the kingdom of God. Such Saints truly feel and live the principle that King Benjamin taught to the Nephites: "When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17).

Pay tithes and offerings

Brothers and sisters, how can every member enjoy the thrill and the blessing that comes from making a sacrifice to help the work? The answer is very simple, as are most answers in the Church. Every member of the Church can pay a full, honest tithing and can attend tithing settlement. The Lord said, "Verily [now] is a day of sacrifice, and a day for the tithing of my people" (D&C 64:23).

Let me remind you of President Spencer W. Kimball's statement on fast offerings:

"Sometimes," he said, "we have been a bit penurious and figured that we had for breakfast one egg and that cost so many cents and then we give that to the Lord. I think that when we are affluent, as many of us are, that we ought to be very, very generous. . . .

" . . . I think we should . . . give, instead of the amount we saved by our two meals of fasting, perhaps much, much more—ten times more where we are in a position to do it" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1974, p. 184).

Every member can give a generous fast offering.

Brothers and sisters, the Church needs your contributions to the general missionary fund. This fund makes possible the service of thousands of missionaries. Those who can should feel free to contribute generously. The Lord provides an equal opportunity for every member everywhere in the world to receive the blessings that come from paying tithes and offerings.

Where much is given, much is required

Every member can give his time and talents freely to the building up of the kingdom of God upon the earth. No member of the Church should miss this opportunity to exercise his faith and feel the spirit that comes from humble sacrifice. Seeing the great good that the Saints in South America do with their meager means helps me realize how much more many of us in other parts of the world could do. We should never forget the Savior's teaching: "Unto whomsoever much is given, of

him shall be much required" (Luke 12:48). He has blessed us abundantly. I think of the teaching words of one of our hymns:

*Because I have been given much,
I too must give;
Because of thy great bounty, Lord,
each day I live
I shall divide my gifts from thee
With ev'ry brother that I see
Who has the need of help from me.
("Because I Have Been Given
Much," Hymns [1985], no. 219)*

I pray that as we leave this conference, each one of us will take from the messages of the Brethren those principles that will help us to become more self-sufficient as Saints.

I testify that we have been taught the truth during this conference, that God lives, that Jesus Christ is his Son, and that the gospel has been restored in these latter days. All of which I do in his sacred name, even the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder M. Russell Ballard has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear an expression from Elder Franklin D. Richards of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

Elder Franklin D. Richards

Sacrifice and service

My dear brothers and sisters, as I have listened to the words of the Brethren this afternoon, much has been said about sacrifice. I couldn't help but think of the words of that great hymn, "Sacrifice brings forth the blessings of heaven" ("Praise to the Man," *Hymns* [1985], no. 25).

I have always felt, however, that, really, it is impossible for us to sacrifice in building the kingdom of God. I

would much rather consider it, instead of a sacrifice, a great opportunity to serve God.

Sister Richards and I lived in Washington, D.C., for fifteen years. When we returned to Salt Lake City, we moved into the Mount Olympus area. Within a year or so, the East Millcreek Stake was divided, as I remember, and President Gordon B. Hinckley was called to be the president of the stake. I was called to be the stake mission president, and for three and a half

years I had the opportunity of serving under President Hinckley.

Service as a General Authority

I was later called to be a full-time mission president, and then, twenty-seven years ago this conference, President N. Eldon Tanner, Elder Theodore M. Burton, and I were called to be General Authorities.

My first assignment was supervising the nine missions on the East Coast from Canada to Florida for five years. That was a great experience. My next assignment was with President Spencer W. Kimball, who was then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, supervising South America.

We organized the first stake in South America in São Paulo, Brazil, in May of 1966. As Elder Lynn A. Sorensen mentioned, the growth there has been tremendous. I remember that President Kimball said, "We're not going to call any North Americans to the major leadership positions." And there were many Latter-day Saints living in São Paulo at that time working in businesses associated with the United States. He said, "We're going to call the local people." And so our policy was to call local men and women to those positions and to be missionaries. At that time, in 1966, there were no stakes in South America, whereas now there are nearly two hundred stakes.

I then had the opportunity to spend three years with Elder Delbert L. Stapley supervising the missions in Central America and Mexico. As I recall, there were two stakes in Mexico then, one in the Colonies and one in Mexico City. Now there are nearly a hundred stakes.

The Church has grown and developed with their local leadership and local missionaries. If I had time, I could relate some tremendous experiences that I have had with young men and women and older men and women involved in missionary service there. I would just like to stress again what Elder M. Russell Ballard said about

how important it is to make contributions to the general missionary fund of the Church.

Every member a missionary

You know, every member is a missionary. I think President David O. McKay first emphasized that duty. I was up in Montana some time ago visiting a stake conference. After the morning session, I was wandering around outside. I saw this young boy standing there all dressed up in his Sunday clothes. I went over to him and said, "Son, you're a fine-looking boy. What's your name?"

He said, "Joseph Smith Curdy."

I said, "Joseph Smith Curdy! That's a fine name. You're going to be a great missionary."

He said, "I'm already a great missionary. Down the street a couple of blocks from where we live there's a family with a couple of boys about my age, and over a period of three or four months, I have been bringing them to church with me. A month or so ago, I said to them, 'How would you like to have the missionaries give you the discussions?'"

"They said, 'Oh, we'd have to talk to our parents.'"

"So we talked to the parents, and the parents said, 'Well, if you will let us listen in, why we'll be glad to have the missionaries teach them.'"

There wasn't any problem with that, so the missionaries gave the family the discussions. Joseph Smith Curdy told me, "That whole family is going to be baptized next Saturday. I'm already a great missionary."

I couldn't help but agree with him.

Brothers and sisters, it is wonderful to have the opportunities we have in this Church, not only in the missionary program but also in the areas of temple work and genealogy.

Testimony

I'm grateful that I was reserved to be born at this particular time in the

history of the world when the gospel has been restored in its fulness. I'm convinced that the Spirit of the Lord is being poured out upon the face of the earth more today than ever before in the history of the world through the restoration of the gospel in its fulness. Because of the Restoration, you and I can bear witness that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, and that Joseph Smith was a great prophet of God. We're told that Joseph Smith has done more for the salvation of mankind than any other man who has ever lived on the earth, save Jesus Christ himself. I bear that witness to you. The Church has been reestablished, the power to act in the name of God has been restored, and we have a great prophet standing at the head of this church today.

May the Lord bless him. And may the choice blessings of our Father in Heaven go with you as you leave this conference, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Richards, for your stirring testimony.

Before hearing President Benson's concluding remarks, we take a moment

to express our sincere appreciation to all who have provided of their services and talents and time in presenting this great conference. We thank the musicians—the Mormon Youth Chorus, the Sandy Primary children's choir, and this great Tabernacle Choir, their conductors and organists.

To our city officials we express appreciation, as we do to the Relief Society and Church Health Unit nurses who have been on hand to render services, and to the ushers and interpreters, who have done so magnificent a work.

We thank the press representatives for the coverage given the conference and the owners and managers of the many radio and television stations and cable systems, who have given their facilities to provide coverage of this great gathering.

It will now be our pleasure and opportunity and privilege to listen to President Ezra Taft Benson, our beloved prophet, after which the Tabernacle Choir will sing "I Believe in Christ."

The benediction will then be offered by Elder Royden G. Derrick of the First Quorum of the Seventy, and this conference will then stand adjourned for six months.

President Ezra Taft Benson

Book of Mormon testifies of Christ

My beloved brethren and sisters, this has been another glorious conference, for which I thank the Lord and commend my brethren for their inspired counsel and the choirs for their uplifting music.

The major mission of the Book of Mormon, as recorded on its title page, is "to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations."

The honest seeker after truth can gain the testimony that Jesus is the

Christ as he prayerfully ponders the inspired words of the Book of Mormon.

Over one-half of all the verses in the Book of Mormon refer to our Lord. Some form of Christ's name is mentioned more frequently per verse in the Book of Mormon than even in the New Testament.

He is given over one hundred different names in the Book of Mormon. Those names have a particular significance in describing His divine nature.

Let us consider some of the attributes of our Lord, as found in the Book of Mormon, that show that Jesus is the Christ. Then let us confirm each

of those attributes about Him with a brief quote from the Book of Mormon.

He is *Alive*: "The life of the world, . . . a life which is endless" (Mosiah 16:9).

He is *Constant*: "The same yesterday, today, and forever" (2 Nephi 27:23).

He is the *Creator*: "He created all things, both in heaven and in earth" (Mosiah 4:9).

He is the *Exemplar*: He "set the example. . . . He said unto the children of men: Follow thou me" (2 Nephi 31:9, 10).

He is *Generous*: "He commandeth none that they shall not partake of his salvation" (2 Nephi 26:24).

He is *Godly*: He is God (see 2 Nephi 27:23).

He is *Good*: "All things which are good cometh of God" (Moroni 7:12).

He is *Gracious*: "He is full of grace" (2 Nephi 2:6).

He is the *Healer*: The "sick, and . . . afflicted with all manner of diseases . . . devils and unclean spirits . . . were healed by the power of the Lamb of God" (1 Nephi 11:31).

He is *Holy*: "O how great the holiness of our God!" (2 Nephi 9:20).

He is *Humble*: "He humbleth himself before the Father" (2 Nephi 31:7).

He is *Joyful*: "The Father hath given" Him a "fulness of joy" (3 Nephi 28:10).

He is our *Judge*: We "shall be brought to stand before the bar of God, to be judged of him" (Mosiah 16:10).

He is *Just*: "The judgments of God are always just" (Mosiah 29:12).

He is *Kind*: He has "loving kindness . . . towards the children of men" (1 Nephi 19:9).

He is the *Lawgiver*: He "gave the law" (3 Nephi 15:5).

He is the *Liberator*: "There is no other head whereby ye can be made free" (Mosiah 5:8).

He is the *Light*: "The light . . . of the world; yea, a light that is endless, that can never be darkened" (Mosiah 16:9).

He is *Loving*: "He loveth the world, even that he layeth down his own life" (2 Nephi 26:24).

He is the *Mediator*: "The great Mediator of all men" (2 Nephi 2:27).

He is *Merciful*: There is a "multitude of his tender mercies" (1 Nephi 8:8).

He is *Mighty*: "Mightier than all the earth" (1 Nephi 4:1).

He is *Miraculous*: A "God of miracles" (2 Nephi 27:23).

He is *Obedient*: Obedient unto the Father "in keeping his commandments" (2 Nephi 31:7).

He is *Omnipotent*: He has "all power, both in heaven and in earth" (Mosiah 4:9).

He is *Omniscient*: "The Lord knoweth all things from the beginning" (1 Nephi 9:6).

He is our *Redeemer*: "All mankind were in a lost and in a fallen state, and ever would be save they should rely on this Redeemer" (1 Nephi 10:6).

He is the *Resurrection*: He brought to pass "the resurrection of the dead, being the first that should rise" (2 Nephi 2:8).

He is *Righteous*: "His ways are righteousness forever" (2 Nephi 1:19).

He is the *Ruler*: He rules "in the heavens above and in the earth beneath" (2 Nephi 29:7).

He is our *Savior*: "There is none other name given under heaven save it be this Jesus Christ . . . whereby man can be saved" (2 Nephi 25:20).

He is *Sinless*: He "suffereth temptation, and yieldeth not to the temptation" (Mosiah 15:5).

He is *Truthful*: "A God of truth, and canst not lie" (Ether 3:12).

He is *Wise*: "He has all wisdom" (Mosiah 4:9).

As I reflect on these and many other marks of our Lord's divinity, as found in the Book of Mormon, my heart cries out with the hymnist:

*O Lord my God, when I in
awesome wonder
Consider all the worlds thy hands
have made,*

*I see the stars, I hear the rolling
thunder,
Thy pow'r thru-out the universe
displayed;
Then sings my soul, my Savior
God, to thee,
How great thou art! How great
thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Savior
God, to thee,
How great thou art! How great
thou art!*
("How Great Thou Art," *Hymns*
[1985], no. 86).

Come unto Christ

Once one is convinced, through the Book of Mormon, that Jesus is the Christ, then he must take the next step; he must come unto Christ. Learning the precepts found in what the Prophet Joseph Smith called the most correct book on earth, the Book of Mormon, is but the first step. Abiding by those precepts found in the "keystone" of our religion gets a man nearer to God than through any other book (see *History of the Church*, 4:461). Can we not see why we should be reading this book daily and practicing its precepts at all times?

We have an increasing number who have been convinced, through the Book of Mormon, that Jesus is the Christ. Now we need an increasing number who will use the Book of Mormon to become committed to Christ. We need to be convinced and committed.

Let us turn again to the Book of Mormon, this time to learn some principles about coming unto Christ, being committed to Him, centered in Him, and consumed in Him. We will quote but a few of the numerous passages on the matter.

Christ's invitation to us

First we need to know that Christ invites us to come unto Him. "Behold, he sendeth an invitation unto all men, for the arms of mercy are extended

towards them. . . . Yea, he saith: Come unto me and ye shall partake of the fruit of the tree of life" (Alma 5:33-34).

Come, for he stands "with open arms to receive you" (Mormon 6:17).

Come, for "he will console you in your afflictions, and he will plead your cause" (Jacob 3:1).

"Come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him" (Omni 26).

As Moroni closed the record of the Jaredite civilization, he wrote, "I would commend you to seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written" (Ether 12:41).

In Moroni's closing words written toward the end of the Nephite civilization, he said, "Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, . . . and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you" (Moroni 10:32).

A Christ-centered life

Those who are committed to Christ "stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places" that they may be in "even until death" (Mosiah 18:9). They "retain the name" of Christ "written always" in their hearts (Mosiah 5:12). They take upon themselves "the name of Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end" (Moroni 6:3).

When we live a Christ-centered life, "we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ" (2 Nephi 25:26). We "receive the pleasing word of God, and feast upon his love" (Jacob 3:2). Even when Nephi's soul was grieved because of his iniquities, he said, "I know in whom I have trusted. My God hath been my support" (2 Nephi 4:19-20).

We remember Alma's counsel: "Let all thy doings be unto the Lord, and whithersoever thou goest let it be in the Lord; yea, let all thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord; yea, let the affections of thy heart be placed upon the

Lord forever. Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings" (Alma 37:36-37).

"Remember, remember," said Helaman, "that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, . . . that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, . . . [they] shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery" (Helaman 5:12).

Nephi said, the Lord "hath filled me with his love, even unto the consuming of my flesh" (2 Nephi 4:21). Those who are consumed in Christ "are made alive in Christ" (2 Nephi 25:25). They "suffer no manner of afflictions, save it were swallowed up in the joy of Christ" (Alma 31:38). They are "clasped in the arms of Jesus" (Mormon 5:11). Nephi said, "I glory in my Jesus, for he hath redeemed my soul" (2 Nephi 33:6). Lehi said, "I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love" (2 Nephi 1:15).

Now, my beloved brethren and sisters, let us read the Book of Mormon and be convinced that Jesus is the Christ. Let us continually reread the Book of Mormon so that we might more fully come to Christ, be committed to Him, centered in Him, and consumed in Him.

We are meeting the adversary every day. The challenges of this era will rival any of the past, and these challenges will increase both spiritually and temporally. We must be close to Christ, we must daily take His name upon us, always remember Him, and keep His commandments.

Be faithful in Christ

In the final letter recorded in the Book of Mormon from Mormon to his son Moroni, he gave counsel that applies to our day. Both father and son were seeing a whole Christian civiliza-

tion fall because its people would not serve the God of the land, even Jesus Christ. Mormon wrote, "And now, my beloved son, notwithstanding their hardness, let us labor diligently; for if we should cease to labor, we should be brought under condemnation; for we have a labor to perform whilst in this tabernacle of clay, that we may conquer the enemy of all righteousness, and rest our souls in the kingdom of God" (Moroni 9:6). You and I have a similar labor to perform now—to conquer the enemy and rest our souls in the kingdom.

Then that great soul Mormon closes his letter to his beloved son, Moroni, with these words.

"My son, be faithful in Christ; and may not the things which I have written grieve thee, to weigh thee down unto death; but may Christ lift thee up, and may his sufferings and death, and the showing his body unto our fathers, and his mercy and long-suffering, and the hope of his glory and of eternal life, rest in your mind forever.

"And may the grace of God the Father, whose throne is high in the heavens, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who sitteth on the right hand of his power, until all things shall become subject unto him, be, and abide with you forever" (Moroni 9:25-26).

My prayer for each of us is that we too will follow that inspired counsel: "Be faithful in Christ." Then He will lift us up and His grace will be and abide with us forever. That this may be so, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "I Believe in Christ." Elder Royden G. Derrick offered the benediction.

SALT LAKE TABERNACLE CHOIR AND ORGAN BROADCAST

The following broadcast, announced by J. Spencer Kinard and originating with KSL Radio and Television, Salt Lake City, Utah, was presented from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 4, 1987, through the courtesy of the Columbia Broadcasting System's network throughout the United States and parts of Canada, and through other facilities to several points overseas:

Announcer: Once more we welcome you within these walls with a program of inspirational Music and Spoken Word from the crossroads of the West.

CBS and its affiliated stations bring you at this hour the Mormon Tabernacle Choir from Temple Square in Salt Lake City, with Jerold Ottley conducting the choir, Robert Cundick, Tabernacle organist, and the Spoken Word given by Spencer Kinard.

(Choir: "Oh Say, What Is Truth?"—Melling)

Announcer: It was Horace Mann who said, "If any man seeks for greatness, let him forget greatness and ask for truth, and he will find both." The Tabernacle Choir opened today's broadcast on a stirring text of John Jaques, with music by Ellen Knowles Melling: "Oh Say, What Is Truth?"

The search for truth leads inexorably to the knowledge that God is the author of all truth, and thus the words of César Franck's anthem, "O Lord most holy, . . . grant us thy truth and love."

(Choir: "O Lord Most Holy"—Franck; arr. Robertson and Schreiner)

Announcer: From Zephaniah and the Psalms comes the text of Mark Hayes' anthem, "And the Father will dance over you in joy! . . . My soul will make its boast in God, for He has answered all my cries. His faithfulness to me is as sure as the dawn of a new day."

(Choir: "And the Father Will Dance"—Hayes)

Announcer: The recent passing of Alexander Schreiner has brought an end to a rich and exemplary life. For more than fifty years, Dr. Schreiner served with distinction as organist at the Tabernacle here on Temple Square. In whatever capacity—recitalist, composer, accompanist—he brought to his music an intense personal devotion born of reverence for art and the divine origins of all beauty and truth. We, his friends in the Tabernacle Choir, pause to remember a great friend, as Tabernacle organist Robert Cundick plays, in memoriam, the "Sinfonia in F," from Cantata 156 by Dr. Schreiner's beloved Johann Sebastian Bach.

(Organ: "Sinfonia in F"—J. S. Bach; tr. Grace)

Announcer: To enjoy the gift of freedom—the gift of free agency God has given us, we must learn to understand this simple gift of life.

Much has been said and done in this world regarding man's philosophies and theories about our politics and religions; but, after twenty centuries of trial and error, of war and contention, we return again to the wisest, most practical and simple system of all. We turn to the gospel of Jesus Christ—to the simplicity of the Sermon on the Mount, to the beauty of the Beatitudes, to the freedom of righteousness. In a very simple way, without money or worldly power, He showed us the path to happiness and eternal life. In His few words, and in the sublime gentleness of His life, He offered us a better, clearer, and more intelligent system for individual happiness and social prosperity. While others talked of governments and laws, of money and influence, Jesus spoke the simple language of the heart. He spoke of loving one's neighbor, of taking care of widows and orphans, of visiting the sick. He said it is hate which makes life difficult and greed which makes the day hard; He taught of the need to be beautiful

within—to have a loving heart, to forgive those who have wronged us, to practice virtue and patience.

To this divine philosophy of life, He added this brief postscript: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; . . . for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:29–30).

And, so it is. Accepting and living the gospel of Jesus Christ is easy—easy if we are Christians in the sense that He wanted us to be; easy if we seek internal refinement over external fashion and wealth; easy if worthiness is more important to us than fame; and easy if we love, without condition or reward.

Taking upon ourselves His yoke, or accepting His gospel, may not change the whole world, but it may change our hearts: not that there be no suffering, but that suffering might be endured; not that there be no tears, but that our tears be mixed with the tears of those who share our hurt or joy; not that there be no mortal death, but that the promise of eternal life might live within us.

And thus, we take upon us His name and live a life of gentle meekness and charity. It is then we learn of the gift to be simple, the gift to be free. It is then we learn to our joy that His promise is true and His yoke is easy.

(Choir: "Simple Gifts"—arr. Lyon)

Announcer: The choir has sung Laurence Lyon's arrangement of an old Shaker melody, "Tis the gift to be simple, tis the gift to be free."

And now, again in memory of Alexander Schreiner, we close with the anthem "Sine Nomine," by Ralph Vaughan Williams, on the hymn of William W. How, "For all the saints who from their labors rest."

(Choir: "Sine Nomine"—Vaughan Williams)

Announcer: Again we leave you from within the shadows of the everlasting hills. May peace be with you this day . . . and always.

Announcer (on radio): This concludes the 3,033rd performance continuing the 59th year of this traditional broadcast from the Mormon Tabernacle on Temple Square, brought to you by CBS and its affiliated stations, originating with station KSL in Salt Lake City.

Jerold Ottley conducted the choir, Robert Cundick was at the organ, and the Spoken Word was given by Spencer Kinard.

In another seven days at this same hour, Music and the Spoken Word will be heard again from the crossroads of the West.

This is the CBS Radio Network.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Mormon Youth Chorus, conducted by Robert C. Bowden, furnished the choral numbers for the Saturday morning session of the conference.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by a Primary children's choir from the Sandy Utah Region, conducted by Sister Patricia Swanson.

At the general priesthood session, music was furnished by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus. Brothers Jerold Ottley and Robert C. Bowden conducted the combined choirs.

The Tabernacle Choir, conducted by Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger, provided music for the Sunday morning and Sunday afternoon sessions.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by Robert Cundick, John Longhurst, and Clay Christiansen, Tabernacle organists.

F. Michael Watson
Clerk of the conference

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